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  Lumalaking utang ng bayan, kailangan bang bayaran?
  Ngayong alas-10 ng gabi

MOTHER and child in the wo of times st together.

SC rules foreign mining firms can operate here

By Dona Z. Pazzibugan

REVERSING its landmark ruling, the Supreme Court yesterday declared that foreign mining companies could exploit the country's mineral resources.

The 246-page decision, the longest in the high court's history, is expected to open the door

SC RULES/ A4

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Storm death toll hits 500

Cory Aquino to receive democracy int'l award

RECOGNIZED as one of six "courageous leaders of a worldwide movement to promote peaceful, political change in Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and Eurasia," former President Cory Aquino will receive the W. Averell Harriman Democracy Award in Washington, DC from the prestigious National Democratic Institute (NDI).

Ms Aquino is scheduled to leave tonight.

Ms Aquino was chosen as one of the six international awardees who are universally recognized according to NDI chair, former US Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright.

The first woman US secretary of state, Albright paid tribute to the peaceful People Power Revolution (Edsa I) that saw the installation of Ms Aquino as the first woman president of the

"Many of the advances worldwide [in the democratic struggle] were influenced by the 1986 Peo-

CORY/ A4

Ocampo wife: ₱2.2 M is my personal loan

By Arlyn dela Cruz
Contributor

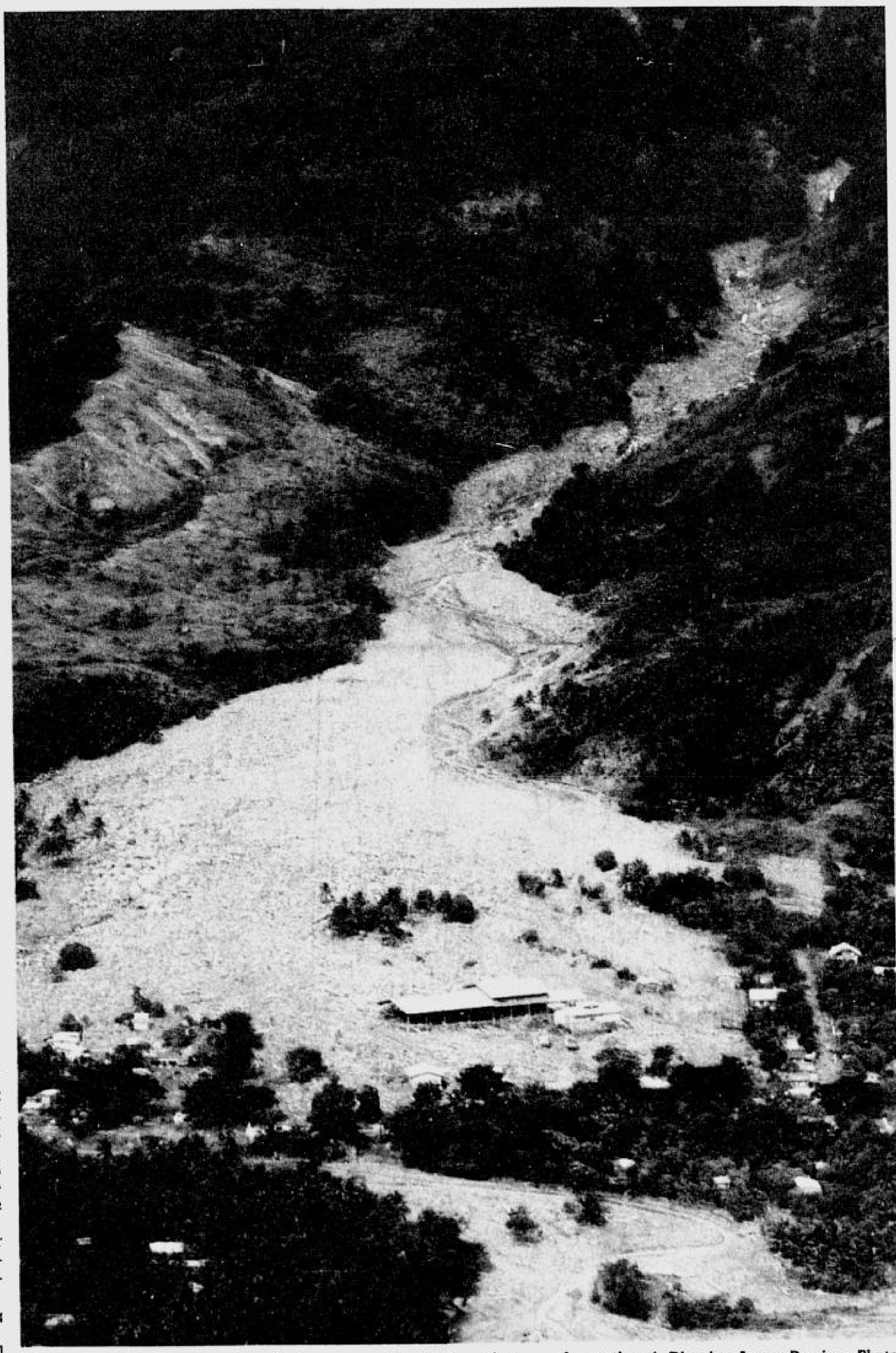
A GENERAL'S wife came forward to stand up for his man.

Evelyn Ignacio-Ocampo, wife of Brig. Gen. Prospero Ocampo, claimed that the alleged P2.2-million swindling case brought against her husband was her own personal loan which she had been paying on installment.

Ocampo is the second general facing court-martial on recommendation of the Office Air Force Inspector General (OAIG).

The OAIG cited Ocampo for violating Articles of War Number 96 and Articles of War Number 97.

OCAMPO/ A4



ACROSS the rampaging river channel of Logawan and into the trees that are no longer there in Dingalan, Aurora Province. Photo was taken from the Philippine Air Force 505th Search and Rescue plane. *(More pictures on Page A20.)* ROGER MARGALLO

Evacuation center in Quezon falls, 100 missing

REAL, Quezon—"Please help us. The others are dead," Olympia Romantico pleaded with journalists who had walked through mud and debris from the outlying village of Maragondon 20 km away.

"You and I must leave now. The rains are coming again and I am afraid," said Romantico, 75, who, along with her naked 7-year-old granddaughter, managed to survive the deadly storm "Winnie" that buried their village in a sea of mud.

Real, a coastal town of 30,000 people, was fast becoming a ghost town as the survivors scrambled to flee another approaching typhoon that was expected to hit land on Thursday night. *(See story on this page.)*

Town officials are preparing a mass burial to prevent the spread of disease, Chief Insp. Paulino Deceda, Quezon chief of police operations, said yesterday.

Deceda said the corpses that were piled in the school grounds were starting to decompose: "The stench of dead bodies is all over the area, so there is no other recourse but to immediately bury them."

STORM/ A22

10 soldiers killed on combat patrol or rescue mission?

By Tonette Orejas and Carmela Reyes
PDI Central Luzon Desk

CAMP GEN. ALEJO SANTOS, Bulacan—Were they on a mercy mission or combat operation?

The military and communist leaderships gave different stories of how 10 Army soldiers were killed in an encounter with New People's Army rebels in San Rafael town, this province, on Tuesday.

A rebel was also killed while six soldiers were wounded, Lt. Col. Preme Monta,

10 SOLDIERS/ A21

Forest rangers to be armed, anti-illegal logging unit formed

By Juliet Labog-Javellana

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday ordered the military and police to crack down on illegal loggers and their financiers after flash floods and landslides triggered by rampant deforestation left more than 500 people dead or missing in Nueva Ecija, Quezon and Aurora.

"Illegal logging must now be placed in the order of most serious crimes against our people," Ms Arroyo said in a statement. "The series of landslides and flash floods that hit several parts of the country should serve as a

FOREST/ A21

STORIES FROM THE DEPTHS

Priest dies while trying to save others

DISASTERS often breed heroes, like the chancellor of the Prelature of Infanta, Quezon, who died Monday while trying to save townsfolk from drowning.

Fr. Charlito Colendres had tied one end of a rope to a tree and was throwing the other end to people caught in the flash flood when he was himself swept away by the surging waters, according to Deacon Mario von Loon, coordinator of the prelature's communications center.

Colendres' sacrifice was typical of this diocesan priest in his 50s who had dedicated his life to serving and building a church of the poor, Von Loon said.

A native of Mindanao, Colendres had served as prelature chancellor for the past two years.

Von Loon said the heroism of Colendres, "in solidarity with his people to the last," reflected the life-saving efforts of the local church led by Bishop Rolando Tria Tirona.

The bishop is himself engaged in local

PRIEST/ A21

STAR DRIVER NG ACTION STAR!

Angelo finds new job as Lapid's driver

By Christine O. Avendaño

FORMER hostage Angelo de la Cruz has a new job.

De la Cruz has ditched his current job as a tricycle driver to become the personal driver to former ac-

ANGELO/ A21

Storm signals up as 'Yoyong' roars toward Luzon

TYPHOON "Yoyong" (international code name Nanmadol) gathered strength yesterday as it continued on a path that threatens areas still reeling from the disastrous effects of Tropical Depression "Winnie" and Typhoons "Violeta" and "Unding."

With winds of up to 185 kph near the center and gustiness of 220 kph, the typhoon is threatening the provinces of Quezon, Aurora, Quirino, Nueva Vizcaya, Benguet and La Union as well as parts of the Bicol region.

This morning, Yoyong is forecast to be 130 km east northeast of Virac, Catanduanes or 350 km north of Guiuan, Eastern Samar, according to the bulletin issued by the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa) at 11 a.m. yesterday.

Moving west northwest at 35 kph, the typhoon is expected to be 160 km north of Infanta, Quezon, or in the vicinity of Aurora province tomorrow morning.

It is expected to be on its way out on Saturday morning at 240 km west northwest of Laoag City in Ilocos Norte.

As of 11 last night, Pagasa raised public storm signal No. 4 over Catanduanes.

Storm Signal No. 3 was raised over Quezon, including Polillo island, Aurora, Quirino, Camarines Norte, Camarines Sur and Isabela.

Storm Signal No. 2 has been raised over Albay, Burias island, Sorsogon, Laguna, Marinduque, Rizal, Bulacan, Nueva Ecija, Pan-

STORM/ A22

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WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Northern Samar, Bicol region, Quezon province and Aurora will experience stormy weather. The rest of Luzon and the rest of Eastern Visayas will have rains and gusty winds. The rest of the country will be cloudy with scattered rainshowers. SOURCE: PAGASA

COMPILED BY RAY LEYESA, PDI RESEARCH/12/02/04

Metro Manila	Rains	Iloilo/Bacolod	Cloudy with Rains
Baguio	Rains	Roxas	Cloudy with Rains
Tuguegarao	Rains	Cebu	Cloudy with Rains
Laoag	Rains	Tacloban	Rains
Clark Zone	Rains	Gen. Santos	Cloudy with Rains
Tagaytay	Cloudy with Rains	Zamboanga	Cloudy with Rains
Legazpi	Stormy	Cagayan de Oro	Cloudy with Rains
Calapan	Rains	Davao	Cloudy with Rains

House OKs ₱907-B budget

By Volt Contreras
and Christine O. Avendaño

THE HOUSE of Representatives approved on second reading yesterday the proposed P907.7-billion national budget for 2005 without touching Malacañang's proposed reduction in the pork barrel funds from the previous P70 million to P40 million per congressman.

After a 20-hour marathon session, the House plenary voted viva voce at 4:42 a.m. Tuesday in favor of what Speaker Jose De Venecia described in a statement as "a reformist and spartan budget."

The bill, however, must still be approved on third and final reading. It will then be submitted to the Senate.

De Venecia, who was in Pakistan on an official trip, noted that the House deliberated on the budget still without considering the "anticipated collections" from Malacañang's eight proposed revenue measures.

But critics of the controversial pork barrel funds, a known source of kickbacks for some lawmakers in connivance with contractors, local officials and state auditors, can't really celebrate just yet.

According to the vice chair of the House appropriations committee, the amount is still "likely" to rise, if not return to the original level, depending on the deliberations at the Senate and at the bicameral conference committee.

"If the Senate moves, we will also move," said Rep. Abraham Mitra (LP, Palawan), when asked about the chances that the original level of their pork will be restored.

Mitra explained that in the approved House version of the budget, the Palace-backed pork allotment of P40 million per congressman "was not touched at the committee level." The amount represents P20 million "embedded" in the budget of the Department of Public Works and Highways, and another P20 million dubbed as Priority Development Assistance Fund, he said.

Compared to senators who serve up to six years per term, he said, congressmen can ill-afford reductions in their pork since they need to deliver projects and services to their districts during their three-year term.

"Our constituents have been lobbying, asking us not to take the cut," he said.

'Conservative projections'

De Venecia said the approved budget for 2005 was based on the Department of Budget and Management's "conservative projections" of revenues from existing sources, mainly tax collections of around P677.7 billion and P80.8 billion from government fees, charges, income and foreign grants.

The education sector will get the lion's share of the budget with P135.5 billion; infrastructure, P56.5 billion; public order and safety, P54.3 billion; social security and development, P40.1 billion, and agriculture and agrarian reform, P25.9 billion.

But party-list Rep. Teodoro Casiño (Bayan Muna) noted out that debt payments will eat up a hefty 33.2 percent of the 2005 budget.

"Only 13 percent or around P122 billion out of the P907-billion total was actually deliberated on by the Lower House," he said.

"The bulk of the funds were either automatically appropriated for debt services and other payments totaling P496 billion or 55 percent, or fixed expenditures for personal services amounting to P290 billion or 32 percent."

Special session

Senate President Franklin Drilon said he was open to the holding of a special session of Congress to ensure the passage of the President's revenue measures.

"I would have no objection if that would be necessary to pass the revenue measures," Drilon told reporters.

But Drilon said it was now impossible for the Senate to tackle the proposed 2005 budget bill this month even with a special session.

'Put your pork where your mouth is'

By Blanche S. Rivera

PUT YOUR pork where your mouth is.

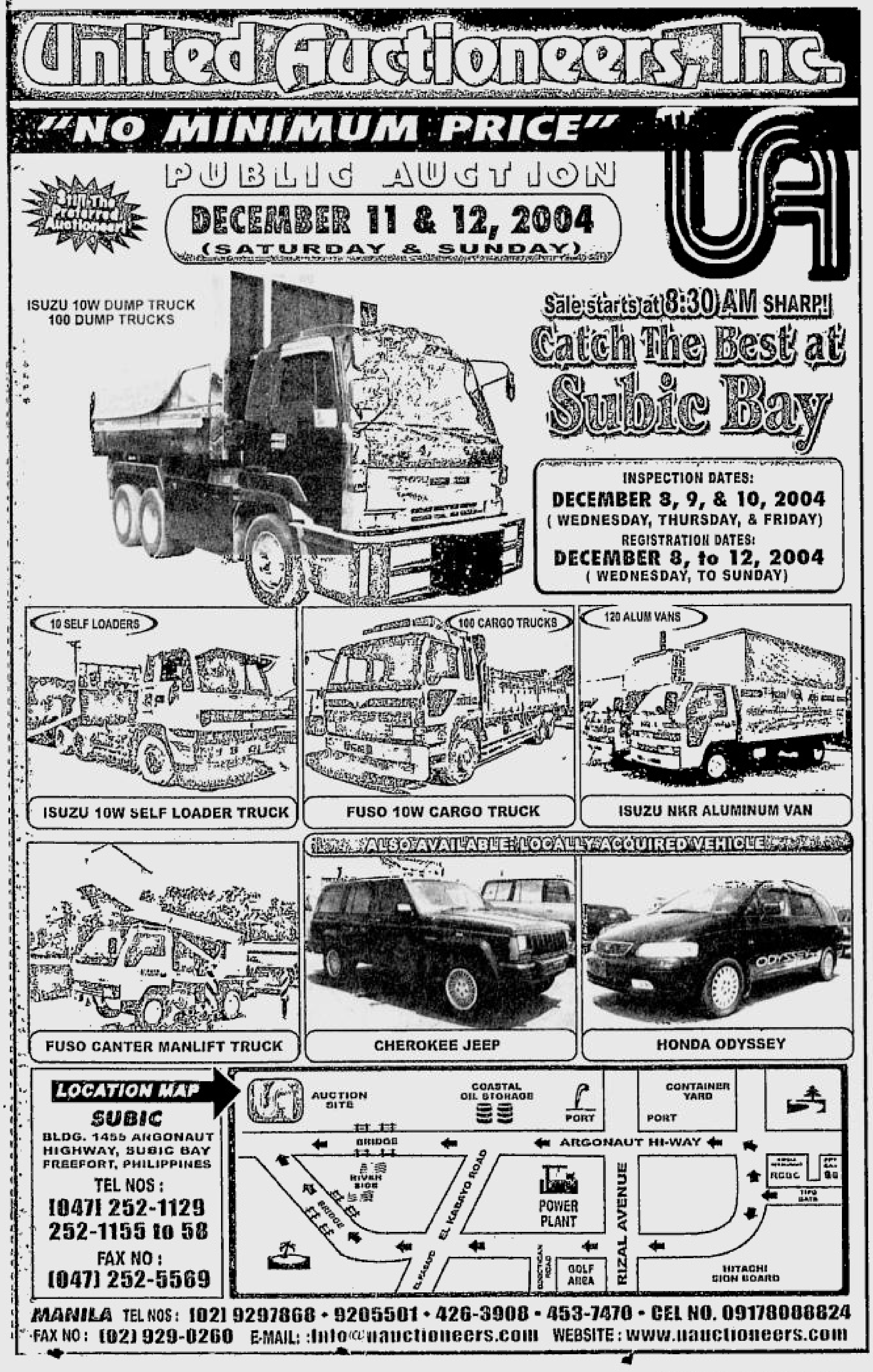
The country's businessmen yesterday dared lawmakers pushing for a state-supported and funded national population management program to give a part of their P20-million pork barrel for social services.

Donald Dee, executive vice president of the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry, said pork barrel from the lawmakers and a portion of the internal revenue allotment (IRA) from local governments would be a move forward for population management advocates.

This pooling of huge resources would show the sincerity of those who want to address the rapid population growth to reduce poverty in the Philippines, he said.

"Give up your pork and IRA and pool your resources to give to social services... We've been talking of population management for three-and-a-half years and we never went beyond debates," Dee said in a forum at the UP School of Economics where a paper on population and poverty by 17 economists was presented.

He said it was frustrating to hear the endless debate on whether population should be managed or not, and how to manage this if indeed it can be controlled.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Nayan tells of 26-day ordeal in Kabul

NAYAN

By TJ Burgonio

JUNIOR diplomat Angelito Nayan thought a lot about escaping from his "ruthless" captors from their hell-hole in Afghanistan, but decided against it so as not to jeopardize negotiations for his release and that of two other staff of the United Nations.

Speaking in his first press briefing, a serious Nayan recounted his 26-day ordeal in the hands of a splinter group of the Taliban extremists. During those dark days, he said, they moved around a lot, walked on foot, and even climbed walls to elude authorities amid freezing weather.

"It would be incredibly selfish [for me to escape], knowing that women would be left behind and would jeopardize the whole negotiations," Nayan said, referring to fellow hostages British-Irish Annetta Flanigan and Kosovar Shqipe Hebibi.

Nayan, Flanigan and Hebibi, who were part of the UN electoral team that helped oversee the Oct. 9 presidential elections in Afghanistan, were freed in Kabul on Nov. 23 following a strong public condemnation and intense manhunt on their captors.

Nayan returned to Manila two days later.

Their ordeal began when gunmen, who identified themselves as members of the Army of Muslims, blocked their UN vehicle in Kabul at past noon on Oct. 28 and dragged them into a vehicle with drawn Kalashnikov rifles.

"We transferred four times... four houses. We had to walk one time for four hours, we were chased by dogs, climbed walls, and ditches," Nayan recalled. "On the first night, we were told to lie down. We thought we were going to be shot dead pointblank. But thank God, it never happened."

In the first two weeks, the hostages were moved back and forth in four houses in Kabul and in the outskirts. Eventually, they settled in an abandoned house until their release. All throughout, each of them was given a "partner," or a guard.

The hostages were allowed to brush their teeth and clean themselves up after eight days, and were given fresh underwear after a fortnight.

Playing charade and cards, reading books and praying hard, Nayan said, had helped them keep their sanity.

"We had to transform the daily harrowing experience until there was a semblance of normalcy. Otherwise, we would lose our sanity... We had to make some scenarios to keep our sanity intact," Nayan said.

One time, Nayan admitted, he was slapped by his captors when he woke up one of them in the middle of the night so he could go to the bathroom.

Asked if they were raped, he said: "They were pretty touchy... They played with my beard and the patches of hair I have." He said his fellow hostages were not assaulted, but recalled that their captors liked to play with the women's hair.

Nayan said they were treated well by their captors and were regularly served with a fare of cookies, fruits and boiled eggs.

"I don't feel any hatred toward them. It could have been some foreigners. I believe that they were just after money that unfortunately became political," Nayan said.

Their captors, he said, even apologized to them profusely before they were released.

According to Nayan, he would love to go back to Afghanistan if given a chance. "I could probably join the team which will open maybe a consulate in Kabul," he said. "There's something about the place despite the harrowing experience. The people are pretty warm."

For now, Nayan said he would focus on his career in the foreign service. Since he's still undergoing debriefing and counseling, he had sought a two-week extension of his six-month leave, which was supposed to end Nov. 28.

Sandigan OKs Erap plea for HK surgery

THE SANDIGANBAYAN anti-graft court yesterday granted a petition from ousted President Estrada to be allowed to go to Hong Kong for a knee replacement operation despite warnings from Presiding Justice Edilberto Sandoval that the jailed Estrada might attempt to escape.

Four justices, however, opted to allow Estrada to travel for 20 days—starting from the original time-frame of Nov. 22 to Dec. 12—for "humanitarian reasons."

Those who signed the resolution approving Estrada's trip were Associate Justices Francisco H. Villaruz Jr., Teresita Leonardo-de Castro, Efren de la Cruz and Teresita V. Diaz-Baldos.

Sandoval, who chairs the Special Division trying Estrada for plunder, was the lone dissenter.

He warned that the resolution "would open a floodgate of petitions for the same relief all over the country from other accused similarly or better situated."

"It would give rise sooner or later to some complex problem or enigma involving sovereign states now that the accused-movant is no longer within the jurisdiction of this court," he said.

But the four justices said they were only adhering to the same reasons cited by the court, then headed by Justice Minita Chico-Nazario, which on Dec. 23, 2003 granted Estrada's wish to be allowed to go to the US for his operation.

Estrada, however, never left after failing to secure a US visa. He also balked at the expense for a US operation that could go as high as $1 million.

The court gave credence to the claim of Estrada's doctors that he had to undergo a "total joint replacement anthroscopic surgery," or suffer paralysis from the waist down.

In its ruling, the court said Estrada should have the operation at the Hong Kong Adventist Hospital and be confined there and "not any other place."

The operation will be performed by his US physician, Christopher Mow.

Estrada was ordered to post a P1 million travel bond and was asked to submit to the court before his departure a "personal undertaking that he will return to the Philippines" within the date set by the court and that he was "recognizing" the authority of the court on his person and the cases filed against him.

The court ordered Director General Edgar Aglipay, the Philippine National Police chief, to provide Estrada with four police escorts, with the disgraced leader footing the bill.

Before the Sandiganbayan granted Estrada's petition to be allowed to go to Hong Kong, his lawyer Rene Saguisag went to the Supreme Court and asked the high court to dissolve the special division trying Estrada's case for allegedly sitting on the petition.

Saguisag told the high court that as of Nov. 30, the special division had not ruled on the request which was submitted on Oct. 21.

Saguisag said arrangements had already been made for Estrada's hospital admission to the Hong Kong hospital on Nov. 24.

"Money and time were spent. The matter is now moot due to judicial indolence, with all due respect," Saguisag told the high court.

"If the special court or division cannot resolve a motion one way or the other, in more than a month, either it should be dissolved or hearings reduced to once a week," Saguisag said. *Armand Nocum and Dona Pazzibugan*

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Guia's secretary, guard testify for Erap, belie Chavit story

By Armand N. Nocum

GUIA Gomez's appointment secretary and security guard have denied seeing Ilocos Sur Gov. Luis "Chavit" Singson in the Gomez residence in San Juan to deliver alleged "jueteng" money.

Appearing as 14th defense witness, Susan Aviles told the Sandiganbayan hearing the plunder and perjury charges against deposed President Joseph Estrada that she had not seen Singson visit the Gomez house at No. 1 Ibuna corner P. Guevarra Streets on Nov. 30, 1999.

Singson had claimed in the impeachment trial against Estrada that he went to the Gomez residence and delivered money from jueteng collection.

"There is no truth to what he (Singson) was saying," Aviles said in Filipino when asked by defense counsel Jose Flaminiano. "He had not been there even once," she said.

As appointment secretary, Aviles said, she would have known about Singson's visit since she screened all visitors of Gomez, mother of San Juan Mayor JV Ejercito.

Since she stayed with the Gomezes from Monday to midnight of Saturday, Aviles said it would be impossible to miss out Singson.

She claimed she only saw Singson on television.

But during cross examination, Special Prosecutor Dennis Villa-Ignacio managed to make Aviles admit that she could not have known all visitors who entered the Gomez house on weekends.

Aviles also admitted that she could not remember all the visitors or days when she was on duty or off duty after Villa-Ignacio gave a rundown of dates.

But those dates turned out to be on weekends, forcing Aviles to admit that she could not remember all the dates.

"The purpose for which she was presented was not realized. She admitted that on weekends, she leaves the house of Gomez," Villa-Ignacio said, adding that Aviles "cannot categorically" say whether Singson or his staff Emma Lim visited Gomez's place on weekends.

Noel Buendia, the 11th defense witness and a stay-in guard, also testified not seeing Singson even once in San Juan from 1998 to October 2002.

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Foreign business groups hail high court ruling

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr., Christine Gaylican and Ronnel W. Domingo

FOREIGN business groups, local mining companies and President Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday hailed the Supreme Court decision, saying this will help boost the economy.

"The Supreme Court has rendered a decision that firmly upholds the national interest. As the fifth mineralized country in the world with a close proximity to the biggest market for minerals, China, the Philippines is poised for a strong economic takeoff based on reinvigorated mining industry," Ms Arroyo said in a statement relayed by his spokesperson, Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye.

Spoken with wisdom

"The high court has spoken with wisdom and joins the other great powers of government in doing what is best for the nation and people at this time of challenge and opportunity," said the President.

The President said that as the billions of dollars in new investments poured into the mining industry, "the rural areas will experience a significant boost in jobs and productivity, plus a strong surge in infrastructure development."

She said the full development of the mining industry would "come hand in hand with the full protection of the environment and a sturdy umbrella of social and economic returns for the communities especially the indigenous peoples."

"God bless the Supreme Court. A negative decision would have been disastrous to the Philippine economy," Environment Secretary Michael T. Defensor said.

Benjamin Philip Romualdez, president of Chamber of Mines of the Philippines, said the mining industry's growth and the country's mineral production would finally increase with the landmark decision.

Go full blast

"We can finally move on and go full blast with our operations. This has sealed the fate of the Philippine mining industry in the coming years," Romualdez told the INQUIRER.

"We thank the wisdom of the Supreme Court justices for this opportunity that they have provided our industry. We are also grateful to President Arroyo and her Cabinet for their continuous support to us," Romualdez said.

Romualdez said the SC decision would ensure the flow of foreign direct investments into the country. He noted that there would be an international minerals conference in Manila on Feb. 2-4.

He added that the revival of the Philippine mining industry would mean responsible mining activities and that the industry would closely work with environment groups and indigenous peoples to ensure sustainable mining activities.

Tony Robbins, Philippine Mineral Exploration Association president, said the reversal of the SC decision would send a positive note to foreign investors, who have been waiting on the sidelines.

"This new ruling will guarantee our future investments in the Philippines," said Robbins, who is also president of Indophil Holdings, the company that acquired the Tampacan mining project in Mindanao from Western Mining Corp.

Robbins noted that the legal question on the Philippine mining law had discouraged foreign investors the past six years.

Welcome news

"This is a welcome news. This is one of the untapped industries which can eventually cushion the impact of fiscal woes," said analyst and fund manager Astro del Castillo, managing director of First Grade Holdings.

Del Castillo said various foreign chambers of commerce were looking forward to this reversal.

Henry J. Schumacher, executive vice president of the European Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines, said the ruling was "very good news."

"We have been hoping for this as this would mean investments in the sector could (liven up) again," Schumacher said.

A revitalized local mining industry could generate as much as $6.2 billion in foreign investments from new large-scale metallic mining and mineral exploration projects over the next six years, according to the Mines and Geosciences Bureau.

Trade Secretary Cesar V. Purisima had listed the mining sector as one of the seven priority areas for investment promotion.

Purisima said such resources were estimated to be worth $964.7 billion.

The American Chamber of Commerce earlier lauded the signing of Executive Order No. 270 that outlined the policy agenda for the mining sector, saying this would open up and revitalize the mining activities.

Large-scale projects

To date, some 22 large-scale metallic projects worth $6.1 billion and 25 exploration projects worth $62 million are pending with the mining bureau.

These include three nickel projects worth P1 billion each and planned to start in 2009. These involve Nonoc Processing Corp., Asiaticus Pujada and Aglubang Mining Corp.

Also included are Silangan Mindanao Mining Corp.'s P500-million copper project for 2009; Benguet Corp.'s P532-million copper-gold project for 2007; Climax Arimco Mining Corp.'s P63-million copper-gold project for 2006, and Lepanto to Consolidated Mining's P80-million gold project for 2004.

The Philippines could raise $2.8 billion each year from the sale of gold, copper, nickel and other minerals if mining projects in the pipeline are not derailed in the next six years, according to the Mines and Geosciences Bureau.

"Large-scale mining projects now in the exploration and development stage will hopefully create these needed revenues for the government," Mining Tenements Division head Leo Jasareno said.

"To develop the mines there is partly some need for foreign capital," Jasareno noted.

The identified mining projects needed capital investments of at least $6 billion in the next six years.

These mining projects are projected to have multiplier effects in the Philippine economy could generate 41,400 jobs during the construction phase and a total of 210,426 during the commercial operations.

Data from the Mines Bureau indicated that only 30 percent of the country's land area had been explored for mineral deposits.

The country is now at the bottom in terms of exporting minerals having been overtaken by Vietnam and other Southeast Asian countries. From a peak of $1.2 billion in 1980, this has declined to less than $500 million beginning in the year 2000.

With a report from Doris C. Dumlao

SC rules foreign mining firms can operate here

From page A1

to billions of dollars in foreign investment in the country's mining sector, which was previously restricted only to locally controlled companies.

The high court struck down in January as unconstitutional the Philippine Mining Act or Republic Act No. 7942. The earlier ruling had cited a constitutional provision that requires companies exploiting natural resources to be majority-controlled by Filipino entities.

Voting: 10-4

However, the court, voting 10-4 with one abstention, ruled yesterday that the Financial-Technical Assistance Agreement (FTAA) that foreign companies could enter into with the government as part of the Mining Act was legal.

The Constitution "expressly provides that the State may undertake this kind of activity, exploration and development by agreement with foreign-owned corporations involving technical or financial assistance," the decision read.

The Charter "expressly allows service contracts in large-scale exploration, development and utilization of minerals and mineral oils," it added.

The high court said that the President was constitutionally mandated to enter into agreements with foreign-owned corporations, and that Congress had the right to review such contracts.

In contrast, the court said the Constitution was silent on the role of the judiciary.

"Clearly then, the judiciary should not inordinately interfere in the exercise of this presidential power of control over the exploration, development and utilization of our natural resources," said the court.

The justices who favored the new ruling were Chief Justice Hilario Davide, Artemio Panganiban, Reynato Puno, Leonardo Quisumbing, Angelina Sandoval-Gutierrez, Alicia Austria-Martinez, Renato Corona, Dante Tinga, Minita Chico-Nazario and Cancio Garcia.

The four who dissented were Associate Justices Consuelo Ynares-Santiago, Antonio Carpio, Romeo Callejo and Conchito Carpio-Morales, who wrote the original decision.

Associate Justice Adolfo Azcuna again abstained because he was a former counsel of the Australian mining firm involved in the case.

$10-B investments

Penned by Panganiban, the decision gave weight to the huge economic cost of losing foreign mining investments.

The government estimated that the country would have lost about $10 billion in foreign mining investments had the high court upheld its January decision.

Mining is a sensitive issue because according to nongovernment organizations, it displaces entire communities from their ancestral lands.

To this the court said: "Verily, the mineral wealth and natural resources of this country are meant to benefit not merely a select group of people living in the areas locally affected by mining activities, but the entire Filipino nation, present and future to whom the mineral wealth really belongs."

"This court has therefore weighed carefully the rights and interests of all concerned and decided for the greater good of the greatest number."

Justice for all

"Justice for all, not just for some; justice for the present and the future, not just for the here and now," it added.

The case stemmed from a question on the constitutionality of the 1995 FTAA between the government and Western Mining Corp. Phils., a wholly owned subsidiary of the Australian firm Western Mining Corp. Holdings Ltd.

The court previously voted 7-5 with one abstention in nullifying the mining law and all FTAAs.

The court said then that FTAAs were in fact service contracts in which the government in effect granted a foreign corporation "beneficial ownership over natural resources that properly belong to the State and are intended for the benefit of its citizens."

The court ruled then that FTAAs were prohibited by the 1987 Constitution and were "antithetical to the principle of sovereignty because they allowed foreign control over our natural resources to the prejudice of the Filipino people."

At the time the seven justices, who voted to declare the Mining Act unconstitutional, were Davide, Puno, Quisumbing, Carpio-Morales, Corona, Callejo and Tinga.

Government appeal

Those who upheld the law's constitutionality were: Panganiban, Ynares-Santiago, Sandoval-Gutierrez and Austria-Martinez. Retired Associate Justice Jose Vitug gave a separate opinion. Azcuna abstained at the time.

The government and Western Mining appealed the ruling.

In its new decision, the court declared that the Mining Act, its implementing rules and guidelines and the government's FTAA with Western Mining were constitutional.

It further argued how the mining law should benefit the economy. "The Constitution should be read in broad life-giving strokes," the court said.

"It should not be used to strangulate economic growth or to serve narrow, parochial interest. Rather, it should be construed to grant the President and Congress sufficient discretion and reasonable leeway to enable them to attract foreign investment and expertise as well as to secure for our people and our posterity the blessings of prosperity and peace."

Balancing of interests

The court also stressed "the need for an appropriate balancing of interests and needs."

On the one hand, the government should be able to develop the "stagnating mining industry" and make use of the country's estimated $840 billion worth of mineral wealth to jumpstart the economy.

On the other, the court said there was also a need "to enhance our nationalistic aspirations, protect our indigenous communities and prevent irreversible ecological damage."

The court added that the framers of the 1987 Constitution did not intend to prohibit foreign firms from the mining industry.

"It was evident that the members of the Constitutional Commission realized the insufficiency of Filipino capital and felt the need for foreign expertise in the exploration, development and utilization of mineral resources."

5th largest

The original court ruling had dealt a blow to the investment climate and its reversal is likely to be widely welcomed by the business sector.

Blessed with probably the fifth largest reserves of gold and copper, the Philippines is shunned by many of the world's major mining firms that cite domestic insurgencies, environmental activism and capricious court rulings.

Part of the "rim of fire" of volcanic islands in the Pacific, it has nine million hectares of potential mining land—of which just 1.4 percent is now covered by government permits.

Mining output now is worth about half a billion dollars a year, or 1.33 percent of gross national product. Officials say there is a potential for an annual turnover of at least $4 billion. *With a report from AFP*

Cory Aquino to receive democracy international award

From page A1

ple Power revolution which followed your historic election. As head of state and as first woman president of the republic, your leadership paved the way for political and economic progress."

The Philippines soon became a democratic model for the region, Albright added.

The ceremony will be attended by some 1,000 guests, including senior officials from the US government, members of Congress and diplomats.

'They made History'

Ms Aquino, a democracy icon here and abroad, has also been cited by Time Magazine as one of the 20 most influential leaders in Asia in the last century.

Recently, Danish Broadcasting interviewed her in her home for their international series of worldwide leaders due for release next fall titled, "They Made History."

Some of the other leaders in the Danish television series include Fidel Castro of Cuba, Madeleine Albright of the United States, Margaret Thatcher of England, Aung San Suu Kyi of Burma, Mikhail Gorbachev of Russia, Benazir Bhutto of Pakistan, Archbishop Desmond Tutu of Africa.

Co-awardees

Ms Aquino's democracy co-awardees are Czech Republic President Vaclav Havel, Mali's ex-President Alpha Oumar Konare who now chairs the African Union, President Mikheil Saakashvili of the Republic of Georgia, President Xanana Gusmao of the Democratic Republic of East Timor and Chilean President Ricardo Lagos.

Looking back

The awards come in celebration of the NDI's 20th anniversary and as a way of looking back on the era's momentous democratic advances as well as those who continue the struggle against tremendous odds, Albright said.

Ocampo wife: ₱2.2 M is my personal loan

From page A1

A complaint filed by a Philippine Air Force supplier alleged that Ocampo swindled her of P2.2 million.

Different jobs

"I just want justice for my husband, it's unfair, he is not corrupt, I have been helping him for 36 years so that he would not steal from the military, it's I who had been working for extra income to raise [our] seven children."

"I became a caterer, a travel agent, a real estate agent, I worked at everything so that my husband would not be a thief, and after all that my husband is being made to look like a thief. I won't allow it!"

Ms Ocampo was interviewed over the Iglesia ni Cristo TV station Net-25's Newsbeat. She was trembling, crying and almost hysterical.

Her version of story

Yes, she admitted there was a P2.2-million transaction with supplier Olivia Pasamba but the transaction did not involve her husband.

"That was my personal loan and I am in the process of paying it. I had already paid her one check. I am nearly finished paying her my loan. My husband has nothing to do with my loan.

Ms Ocampo said she even faced an estafa case for the loan from Pasamba.

Documentation

The general's wife showed a handwritten copy of a receipt made by a lawyer, Vener Malabanan III, counsel for Pasamba, acknowledging the checks issued by Ms Ocampo amounting to P54,166 as partial payment for her obligation.

The checks were from Allied Bank with numbers 33252 and 33275. The acknowledgement letter was dated Oct. 11, 2004.

Ms Ocampo also presented a copy of an Affidavit of Desistance by Pasamba against her husband Ocampo filed with the Office of the Ombudsman. In the affidavit, Pasamba stated that she "is no longer interested in the prosecution of the case as there is no more basis for the criminal complaint."

Blames PAF corruption

Ms Ocampo claimed that the leadership of the Philippine Air Force was just "justifying the relief of my husband, because he refused to be part of any corruption."

Ms Ocampo brought with her blank vouchers which she claimed the immediate successor of Ocampo, now Wing Commander of 570th Tactical Wing Command based in Puerto Princesa, Palawan, allegedly coerced her husband to sign shortly after the official turnover of command from Ocampo to Col. Aurelio Marquez.

Blank vouchers

"Isn't that a clear case of irregularity? Why do they want my husband to sign blank vouchers? For what? Then when he refused to sign they made up the story against my husband using my personal loan which had nothing to do with him," Ms Ocampo fumed.

The voucher that Ms Ocampo showed Net-25's Newsbeat was a travel voucher assigned to the 570th Tactical Wing Command. She also showed copies of two vouchers for a P52,999 transaction with Two Dragon Trading and Construction Supply and another voucher worth P74,995.

The real reason her husband was also relieved, according to Ms Ocampo, was because the Air Force leadership wanted to give way to Marquez "so he could have his star [promotion to general] as he didn't have much time left in the service so they removed my husband. It's that petty."

The security officer who was asked to deliver the blank vouchers to General Ocampo was also sacked, according to his wife.

Complained to superiors

Ms Ocampo said she wrote a letter to Susan Abaya, wife of then AFP Chief of Staff Gen. Narciso Abaya, now retired. In the letter she complained about the bum deal her husband was getting.

Ms Ocampo also said that she talked to Air Force Inspector General Jaime Biernes on the phone and asked why a case was filed against her husband when it was she who had the financial obligation to settle.

On instructions

"You know what he [Biernes] told me? That he was only under instructions. Is that how things now work in the AFP. You file a case on the basis of instructions?" Ms Ocampo continued in between sobs.

She admitted threatening the aide of Air Force chief Maj. Jose Reyes on the phone, "because I was so angry I said I would block their appointment at the Commission on Appointments."

Ms Ocampo also made reference to accusations about generals' wives as "*biyaheras*" or wives who travel abroad on a regular basis.

"It's easy to check that I don't travel, the general would never allow it," she said.

"We have only one house, one property but we're still paying for it," said Ms Ocampo who was in tears the whole time she was talking to Newsbeat.

After the taped interview with Ms Ocampo, Newsbeat learned that General Ocampo was outside the TV station trying to catch up with his wife to stop her from talking.

There was a scheduled 2 p.m. press conference but that was canceled because General Ocampo said, according to one of the escorts of Ms Ocampo, the interview with Newsbeat would be the first and the last.

Air Force side

Sought to comment on the phone about Ms Ocampo's allegations, Air Force spokesperson Col. Restituto Padilla said: "Mrs. Ocampo should air her side in the proper forum, not the media."

Padilla also said that aside from the P2.2-million alleged swindling case, General Ocampo was investigated for a project that was left hanging during his command.

"He reported that the project was finished but when the project was inspected, those tasked to investigate found out that it was not," Padilla said refusing to go into details.

Truth must be told

But Ms Ocampo said, "No, I am doing this so that the truth would come out. They have ruined the name of my husband and that is something that no wife who knows her husband stood for what is right would ever allow."

Bishops: Don't blame us for poverty

By Blanche S. Rivera

A FORMER president of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines yesterday said that University of the Philippines economists should not link the Catholic Church to the poverty being experienced by majority of large families in the country.

Pangasinan Archbishop Oscar Cruz said the economists should instead look at how the government is spending the people's taxes to assess how it is caring for the burgeoning population.

"It is incongruous to accuse the Church for the poverty of the country on account of the population. People are the wealth of a country. It is government mismanagement of the national economy that makes them poor," Cruz said in a statement he issued yesterday titled "Truce."

"The Filipinos are poor, not on account of their number, but due to unabated public graft and corruption," he said.

Cruz, an expert in canon law, was reacting to a paper by 17 economists from the UP School of Economics urging the Catholic clergy to soften its stance on population management and adopt the Second Vatican Council teaching allowing people to decide based on their informed consciences.

More tolerant

The economists said that the Catholic Church should be more tolerant and humane by allowing couples to use contraceptives to achieve the number of children they want and their birth spacing.

The paper noted that poverty incidence rises with an increased family size, and that the national government spending for social services could not catch up with the demands of the population relying on government services.

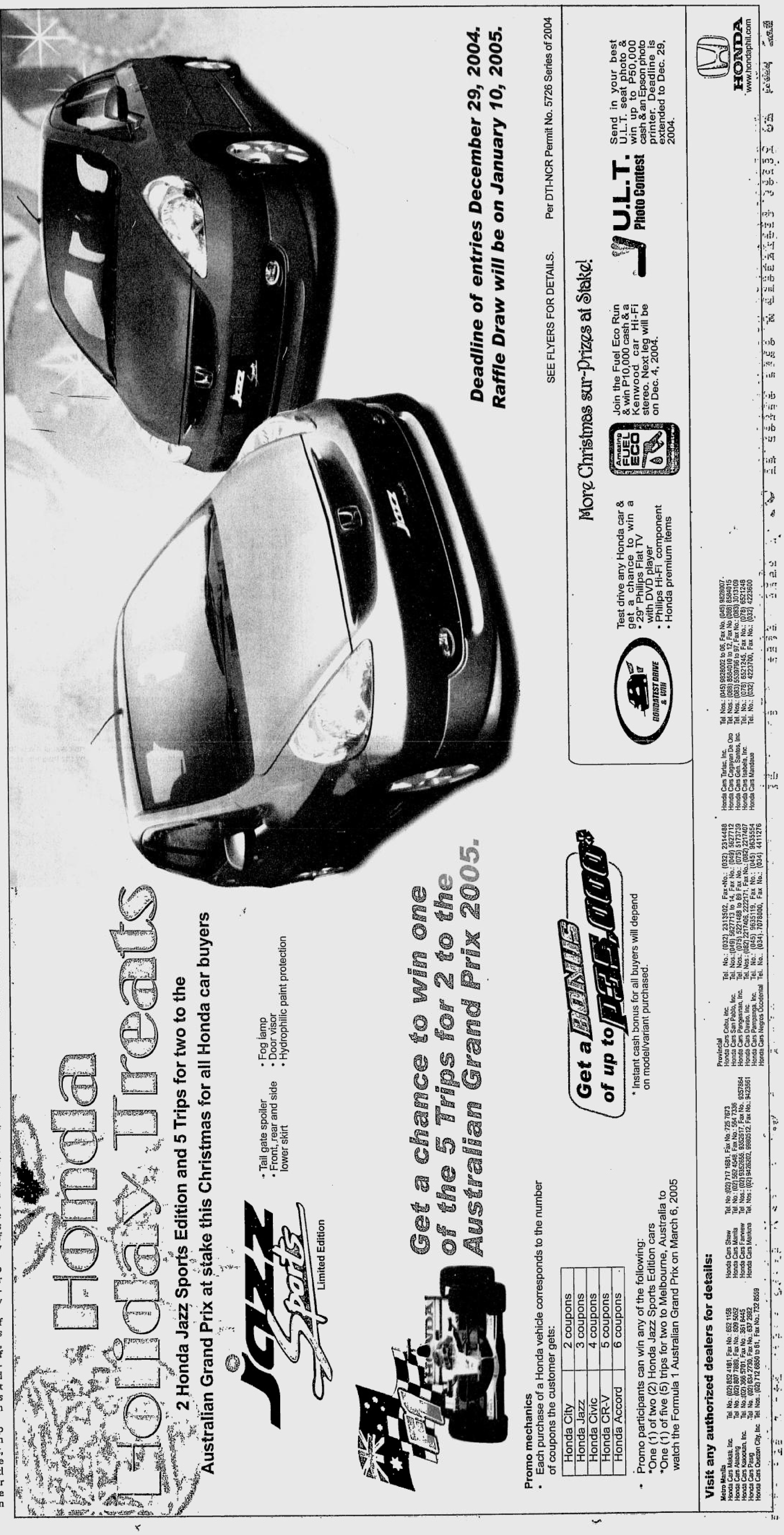
University of Asia and the Pacific economics professor Robert de Vera, whose papers have been cited by the Catholic Church to support its position, said that while larger families are poorer, this is not because of the family size.

De Vera said 78 percent to 90 percent of the heads of these poor, large households did not have even a high school diploma, which points to the lack of education as the main cause of poverty, not family size.

"It is so easy to blame population for its poverty. But this accusation is flagrantly false," Cruz said.

"The scarcity of work is what makes them unproductive, the stagnancy of salaries is what disables them to spend more. The high cost of basic necessities is what makes them hungry," he added.

The archbishop turned his attention to the government, which is handling the people's taxes and should be liable for taking care of the country's 84 million population.



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ANNOUNCEMENT

The **PHILIPPINE INSTITUTE OF CIVIL ENGINEERS LUNGSOD NG MAYNILA CHAPTER** will hold its 21st Annual Induction of Officers for CY-2005 and Christmas Party at the *Coral Ballroom CCT* **MANILA PAVILION**, UN. Avenue, Metro Manila on December 8, 2004. The Event will start 5:00 PM, with

Vice-President NOLI DE CASTRO

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Congratulations to **MR. JESSE PHILIP EIJANSANTOS** for winning a Brand New Toyota Revo in the *PICE-LNM Chapter* **"PANGKABUHAYANG HANDOG RAFFLE DRAW"** w/c is held on September 8, 2004. His Winning Ticket # is 0826.

Palace defends defense revamp

By Juliet Labog-Javellana

MALACAÑANG yesterday justified the revamp at the Department of National Defense, which resulted in the replacement of three undersecretaries and one assistant secretary.

"The revamp of the defense department is part of the overall fight against corruption and waste in government and has implications on the future of our defense and security programs," Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said in a statement.

"This reinforces the President's commitment to implementing reforms in the entire bureaucracy and put the fittest officials in key positions of authority," Bunye said.

Bunye however did not say which officials replaced by the President were involved in specific cases of corruption.

Ms Arroyo appointed four new undersecretaries and one assistant secretary days after ordering Defense Secretary Avelino Cruz Jr. to undertake a revamp in his department.

They were Francisco del Rosario as new defense undersecretary for finance replacing Feliciano Gacis; Jose Santos as undersecretary for defense acquisition replacing Cesar Bello; Rafael Antonio Santos as undersecretary for operations in place of Edgardo Batenga, and Rodel Cruz as undersecretary for legal and priority concerns.

Also appointed was Othelo Carag as new assistant secretary, replacing Leticia Gloria who is set to retire early next year.

"This revamp reinforces the civilian character of the defense department and will speed up much needed systemic and structural improvements to cut out corruption and improve frontline services to our soldiers," the President had said.

Del Rosario and Jose Santos were bankers while Rafael Antonio Santos and Cruz were lawyers.

The three new undersecretaries will be part of a "special team" that would implement the Philippine Defense Reform program and the Armed Forces of the Philippines Capability Upgrade Program, according to the Office of Communications Director headed by Silvestre Afable III.

Jose Santos will sit as chair of the reconstituted Bids and Awards Committee of the Department of National Defense.

The revamp came five days after the President told INQUIRER editors and executives that she ordered a revamp of the undersecretaries and assistant secretaries of the Department of National Defense to stamp out corruption and implement reforms in the department.

Nat'l ID system to solve journalists' slays–Aglipay

By Christian V. Esguerra

WANT to help solve the killings of journalists?

Then help the Philippine National Police convince Congress to pass a law that would require all Filipinos to have a "national ID," PNP Director General Edgar Aglipay told wary media practitioners.

Aglipay broached the idea in response to constant prodding for the PNP to immediately solve and stop the recent rash of murders victimizing media people.

A national ID system would help the PNP operate its fingerprint information system, a newly acquired technology that provides a comprehensive data bank for cross-matching.

But so far, the system is anything but comprehensive. It's even practically empty, Aglipay admitted.

"We have the system but we have nothing to put in there," he said during a meeting with the National Union of Journalists of the Philippines in Camp Crame.

"We're having a hard time because the law bars us from getting the fingerprints of our citizens."

Aglipay explained that the procedure was meant only to provide the PNP with a compilation of fingerprints that could easily be compared with other samples in case of a crime.

The implementation of a national ID system had been previously floated but was met with stiff opposition from human rights advocates. The fear was that the system might only be used by the government to spy on its enemies.

By reviving the controversial proposal, Aglipay was apparently exploring as many suggestions to curb the recent spate of "media killings."

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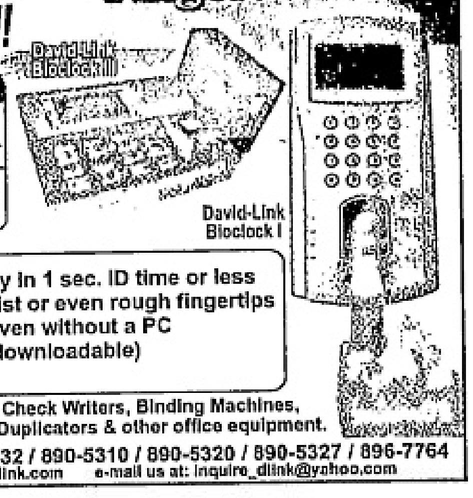
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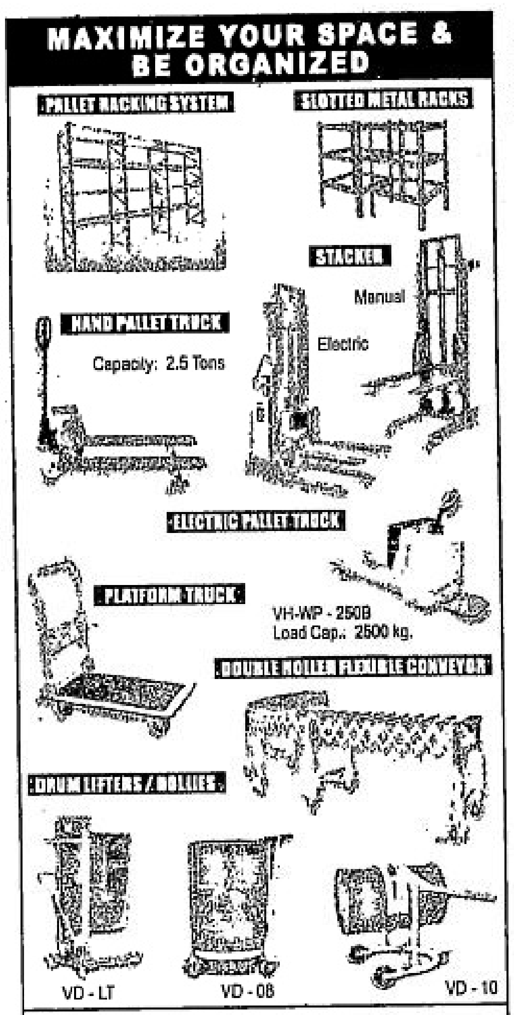
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Tomorrow, December 3, 2004 you are cordially invited to a FIRST FRIDAY MASS at 6:00 PM to be presided by his Excellency, Archbishop Gaudencio B. Rosales, DD, followed by a healing prayer meeting with Fr. Joey Faller at the Santuario de San Antonio Forbes Park, Makati by the MEN OF THE SACRED HEART.

Tanong ng Bayan

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ABC

Tuwing Huwebes, 10:00pm

I-text ang inyong "fearless view" sa 2910. Pipiliin namin ang pinakamagaling na sagot. Ang premyo linggo-linggo: isang 21" color TV set!

I-type: INQTV <ang inyong sagot>, <buong pangalan>, <siyudad o probinsiya>, tapos ipadala sa 2910. Cut-off time: WEDNESDAY, 6 PM. Winner will be identified during the InqTV program: Thursday, 10:00pm, on ABC.

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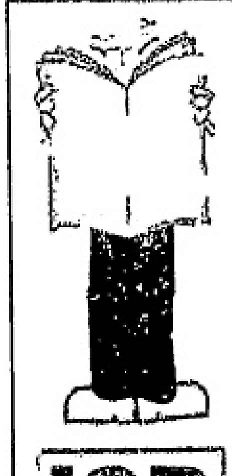

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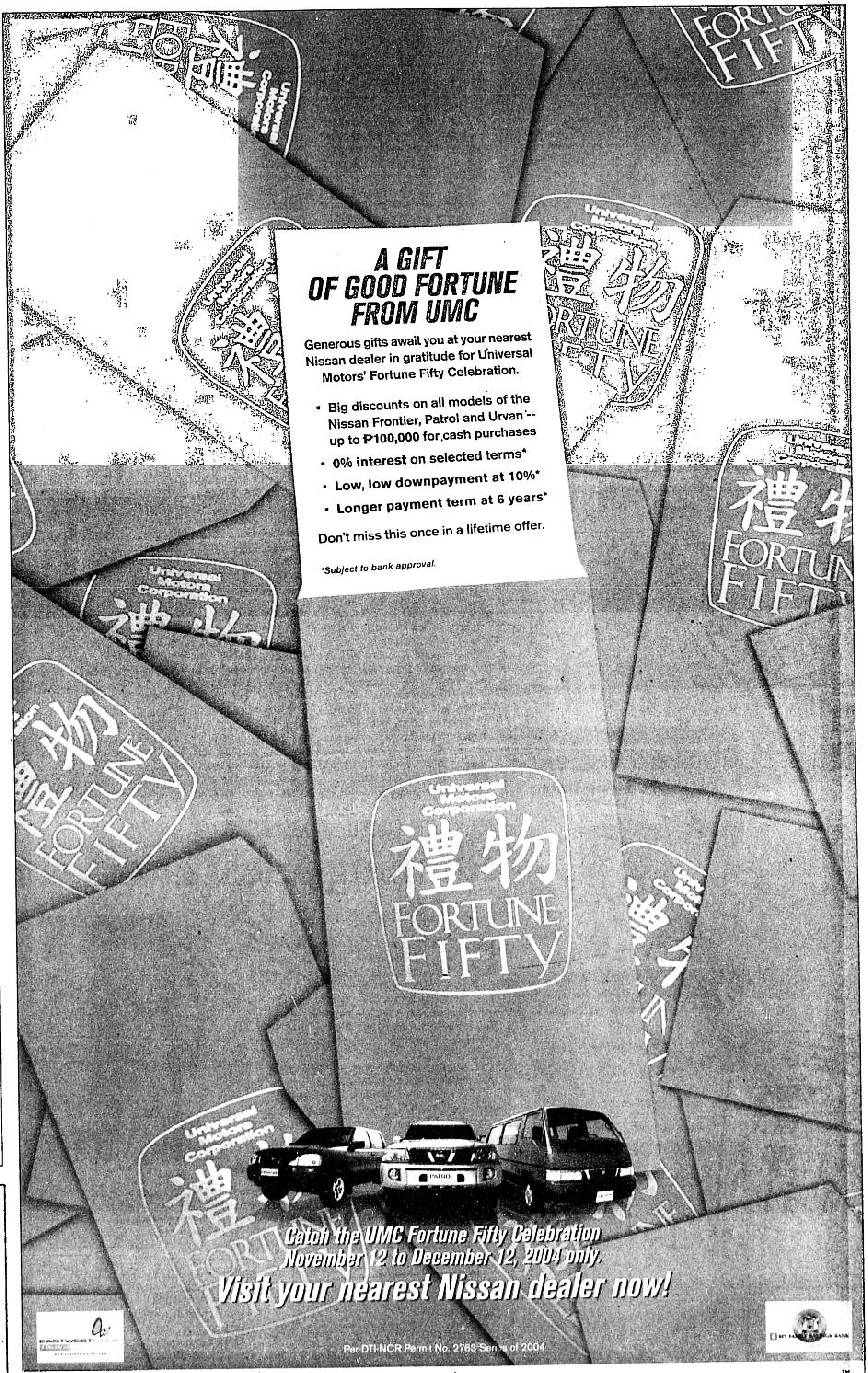
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NISSAN

Abad breezes through in finest moment before CA

By Michael Lim Ubac

IT WAS Education Secretary Florencio Abad's finest moment yesterday when he was formally confirmed by the Commission on Appointments (CA), the same body that rejected his designation as agrarian reform chief some 14 years ago.

Abad breezed through the confirmation process as the CA endorsed and approved his ad interim appointment at yesterday's plenary session, unlike the bitter battle with some members of the powerful body then opposed to his nomination as head of the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR).

The appointment of Tourism Secretary Joseph Durano and the promotion of 59 new colonels also received the CA nod in the same session without opposition.

Abad, a former congressman from Batanes, was named to lead the agrarian department by then President Corazon Aquino, but his nomination had been bypassed several times by the appointments body.

Perceived as pro-farmers by Congress then largely composed of wealthy and landed families, the CA never confirmed his appointment as DAR chief.

The confirmation hearings of Abad and Durano met no opposition in the CA, bolstering claims by the minority in the Senate that their nominations last August to the Cabinet of President Macapagal-Arroyo were political paybacks.

Abad, chair of the Liberal Party, and an ally of Senate President Franklin Drilon, wholeheartedly supported Ms Arroyo in the May 10 presidential election instead of former Sen. Raul Roco, who was reportedly very sick at the height of the campaign. The latter failed to get the backing of the administration coalition after Ms Arroyo decided to seek a fresh six-year mandate.

Durano, on the other hand, is from Cebu, which gave Ms Arroyo a one million vote lead in the last presidential elections.

Aside from Abad and Durano, the CA confirmed the promotion of 59 new full colonels, including Army Col. Aminkadra Undug, who was behind the capture of Ghalib Andang or Commander Robot in Jolo last year.

Undug's confirmation had been opposed by Panamao town Mayor Bassar Abdurajak, who ran against Undug's brother in the mayoral race. But Abdurajak failed to show up in the confirmation hearing the other day, prompting the CA's committee on national defense to set aside the objection.

Of the 59 new colonels, 34 are from the Philippine Navy, 16 from the Air Force, one from the medical corps, two from the nurse corps, three from the dental service, two from the administrative corps and one from the chaplain service.

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WORLD AIDS DAY SITUATIONER

Experts brace for new threat

By Maurice Malanes
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

BAGUIO CITY—As economic hardship continues to drive Filipinos to work overseas, health experts are now bracing for the threat of a potential source of an HIV/AIDS pandemic in the Philippines—overseas Filipino workers.

Dr. Jean Olive, the World Health Organization Philippine representative, said in a report to the health department that as more and more Filipinos "export themselves," overseas Filipinos have become a "potential avenue" for the transmission of the human immuno-deficiency virus (HIV) that causes AIDS.

According to the health department's AIDS registry, overseas Filipinos account for about 30 percent of all people found to be infected with HIV.

On World AIDS Day yesterday, the health department warned that the rate of new infections with HIV has doubled in the Philippines as the disease spreads beyond sex workers to the public.

Could be higher

A total of 2,176 people in the Philippines are confirmed to have been infected with the AIDS virus but experts warn that the actual figure could be much higher.

Health Secretary Manuel Dayrit said a study from December 2003 to October 2004 found that the rate of HIV infection in the country had risen to about 200 cases annually from the previous level of 100 cases in 2001 to 2002.

"The pattern may be changing already. You don't get it now from commercial sex workers," Dayrit warned in a statement.

Of the 200 new cases of HIV infection found, 7 percent came from some of the millions of Filipinos who work abroad.

Fifty-two percent were in professions like teachers, businessmen, barbers, nurses, mechanics, welders and drivers. Five percent were housewives and two percent were children, the department said.

Surprisingly, none of the new infections involved sex workers, it said.

None from sex workers

"If you think you can get it (mainly) through commercial sex workers, the trend is changing. The infection is here, it's infecting everybody from all walks of life and certainly through sexual contact," Dayrit said.

The health department's HIV/AIDS surveillance unit noted "a discernible increase" in the proportion of HIV-positive cases in the national AIDS registry.

These cases involved mostly seafarers of international maritime vessels.

More than seven million Filipinos now work in more than 120 countries worldwide, 14 to 17 percent of whom are seafarers who are "prone to risk behavior" as they dock from one international port to another.

Recognized as among the world's best, Filipino seafarers account for one out of every five of the 1.2 million seafarers in the global fleet.

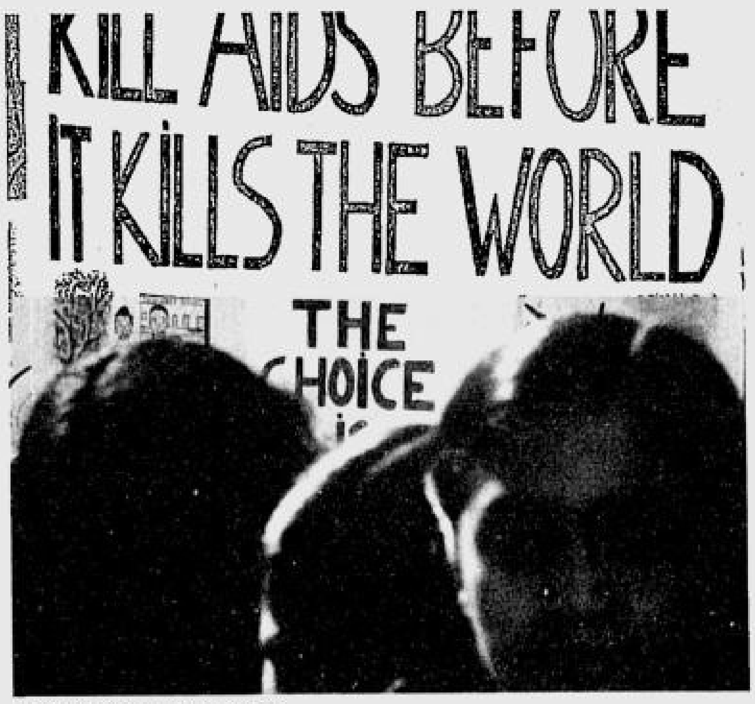
As OFWs return home during their vacations, leaves, intervals between duty tours, or when their contracts expire, there is "a very real danger" of these returning Filipinos bringing home with them the global HIV/AIDS pandemic, said the HIV/AIDS surveillance unit report.

The Department of Health, through the National HIV/AIDS sentinel surveillance system of the National Epidemiology Center, has commissioned the private Field Epidemiology Training Program Alumni Foundation (FETPAFI) to conduct a study to get a better picture of the threat from OFWs.

Risk behavior

The FETPAFI sought to determine the prevalence of HIV, syphilis and Hepatitis-B among returning male seafarers. It surveyed at least 420 of them from Sept. 23 to Nov. 22, 2002.

It also studied the prevalence of risk behavior—e.g. availing of the services of commercial sex workers, the non-use of condoms, etc.—for HIV transmission.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Although none of the 420 seafarers tested during the two-month survey was infected with HIV or syphilis, 31 of them were found positive for Hepatitis B.

While the study showed that the prevalence of HIV/AIDS remains "low and slow," the FETPAFI noted that the seafarers' practices overseas and when they return home after tours of duty were "alarming."

The study revealed that most of the respondents hire the services of a commercial sex worker, about one-fourth with a non-commercial regular partner and 11 percent with a non-commercial non-regular partner.

Only about half of the respondents, who admitted having sex on their last tour, used condoms.

High-risk partners

The failure to use condoms during sex with a high-risk partner was found to be thrice as high among alcohol drinkers.

And consistency of condom use with high-risk partners, the study noted, had nothing to do with the respondents' having received information before they were deployed or with their knowledge that condoms protect one against HIV.

"As the maritime vessels these seafarers serve in ply all oceanic routes and call on ports in all parts of the world, these men are considered as members of a global sex network," said the HIV/AIDS surveillance unit's report.

"As such, they can inadvertently act as conduits of HIV and other STIs (sexually transmitted infections) into the Philippines," it said.

Dayrit said the main mode of transmission of HIV is through unprotected sex with 70 percent of the cases involving heterosexuals, 21 percent homosexuals and nine percent bisexuals.

He said the majority of the new HIV cases were infected through a partner who had multiple sexual partners, including wives whose husbands were cheating on them.

Dayrit said HIV/AIDS infection in the country was still "low and slow" compared to other Asian countries but urged caution.

Foreign and local critics have said that the government's anti-AIDS program is hampered by pressure from the dominant Roman Catholic Church which opposes the distribution of condoms for birth control or disease prevention. *With a report from AFP*

HEALTH OVER MORALITY

Running priest favors condoms

By Jerry E. Esplanada

THE CATHOLIC Church in the Philippines has to "open its eyes to some realities of life" and needs to play a more active role in combating AIDS, according to "running priest" Robert Reyes.

"Between morality and health, morality will always be the priority in an ideal world. But in the actual world, it's health," said the outspoken Reyes who is known for championing social issues.

He said the Church has to stop pretending that it is living in an ideal world.

"Of course, morality matters, but health issues like HIV/AIDS should be an urgent consideration of the Church. We should really get involved," he said.

While the Church agrees that the fight against HIV/AIDS is a moral responsibility, it shuns the chief prevention tool—the condom.

The Church maintains that condoms, or rubber prophylactics, do not really offer an effective protection from AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases.

It also believes that condoms encourage promiscuity.

The Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) has repeatedly warned against condom use, saying it only provides a "false security."

In a July 9, 2001 pastoral letter, then Manila Archbishop Jaime Cardinal Sin said: "The condom corrupts and weakens people, chastity forms and strengthens them. The condom destroys families and individuals, chastity builds them up. The condom spreads promiscuity and thus, STDs and AIDS, while chastity battles them."

Combating HIV/AIDS is a "moral imperative not only of the Catholic Church but all other religious congregations in the country," said Reyes.

REYES

He said the HIV/AIDS crisis was definitely one area where the government and the Church could work together, as it fused "the ideal and the real, the spiritual and the practical".

The Church can complement the work of government, for instance in the area of raising public awareness, said Reyes who is the parish priest of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal church in Proj. 4 in Quezon City.

Dr. Roderick Poblete, head of the Philippine National AIDS Council secretariat, said Reyes' statement was "good news."

Poblete said the PNAC, which groups 26 government agencies and private organizations, considered the Church "a potential energy source."

The council, created in December 1992 under Executive Order 39, is the central advisory, planning and policymaking body of the government's HIV/AIDS prevention and control program.

The Church and rest of the religious sector are not represented in the PNAC.

The PNAC said only "minimal efforts" have been made to mobilize support church groups in its anti-AIDS campaign and no advocacy initiative has been really pursued aimed at religious groups.

Reyes said he has "nothing against condom use by people like seafarers" who use them to avoid contracting the AIDS-causing human immuno-deficiency virus (HIV).

"They're concerned about their health," he said.

But the priest clarified he was "definitely not promoting condom use."

"As much as possible, people like seamen should practise self-control. But I'm sure there'll be situations where such would be a problem. That's why, they bring condoms with them," he said.

Reyes believes the key to combating the plague is educating Catholics and non-Catholics alike and actively involving them in the anti-HIV/AIDS crusade.

He said the Church can help by "(intensifying) its education drive, that is, teaching the virtues of chastity and the dangers of premarital and extra-marital sex."

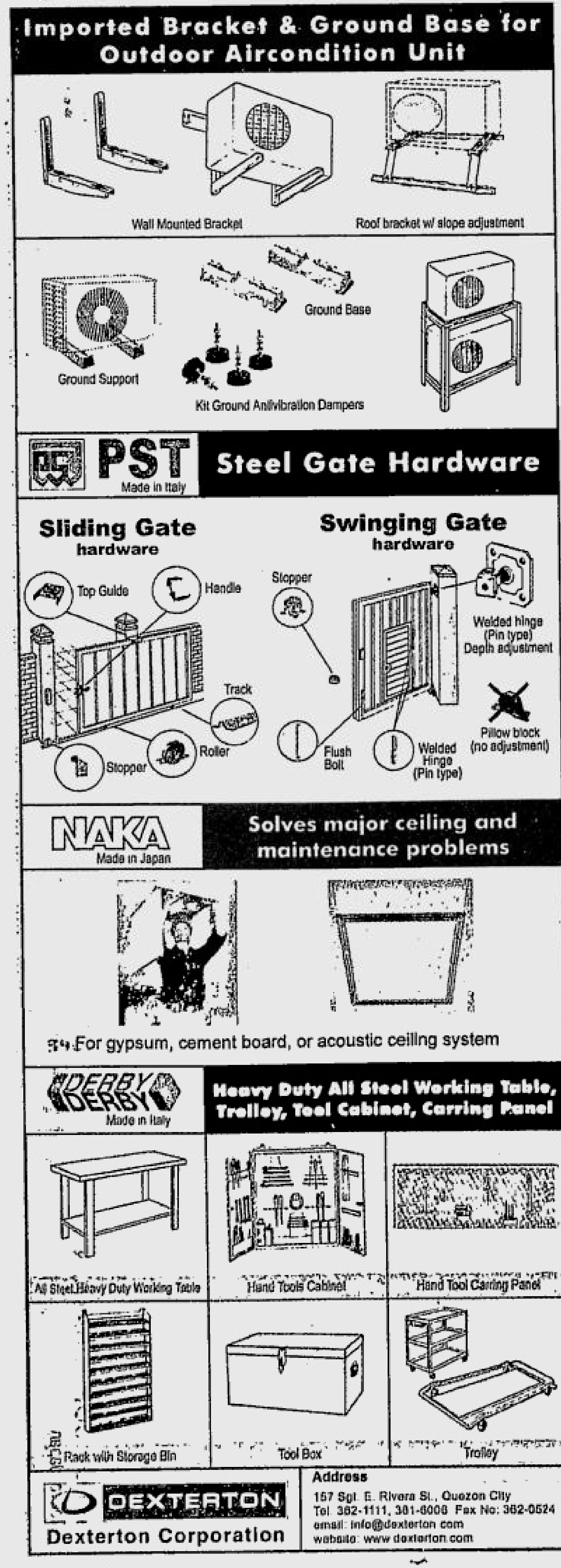
This is a view shared by Fr. Ben Beltran of the Church of the Risen Christ in the former Smokey Mountain in Tondo. They said the AIDS the epidemic cannot be solved only by giving away condoms.

Reyes said expanding what he called the "concept of the pulpit" may also help the fight against HIV/AIDS.

"I believe the Church should really reach out to the country's Roman Catholics, a majority of whom do not go to church regularly," he said.

More than 62 million Filipinos profess to be Catholics.

He said the situation called for the Church to reach out, noting that "the streets are my pulpit, the trees are my altar and the universe is my church."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Abadia blames Mike A, Reyes for wealth case

By Armand N. Nocum

FORMER Armed Forces Chief Lisandro Abadia yesterday accused First Gentleman Jose Miguel "Mike" Arroyo and Interior Secretary Angelo Reyes of being allegedly behind the move to revive an 11-year-old unexplained wealth case against him.

Abadia said Arroyo and Reyes headed a supposed cabal of military and civilian officials that is orchestrating the alleged smear campaign against him to allegedly draw attention away from the case of former AFP controller Maj. Gen. Carlos Garcia, who has been charged with amassing P143 million in ill-gotten wealth.

Ombudsman Simeon Marcelo on Tuesday ordered graft charges filed against Abadia for allegedly accumulating P11 million in "unexplained wealth" during his term as AFP chief from 1991 to 1993.

"The one behind this is really Mike Arroyo," said Abadia.

He accused Arroyo of influencing Marcelo to revive the case to cover up for "the alleged graft of Angie (Reyes)."

Reyes, another former AFP chief, is also under fire for the P18 million increase in his assets from 2002 to 2003 and for the 50 foreign trips allegedly made by his wife.

Abadia said Arroyo was trying to stop Reyes from being dragged into the Garcia controversy.

'Hot seat'

"They want to cover up the Garcia issue and are putting me in the hot seat," he said in a telephone interview late Tuesday.

Reyes called up the INQUIRER at 6:30 p.m. saying he had already spoken with Abadia and told Abadia that he had a wrong impression of him.

"I told him that he had a wrong impression of me and that before he airs out those impressions he should check it out with me first," he said.

The INQUIRER tried to reach Arroyo, who is in San Francisco, on his mobile phone, but there was no answer.

Marcelo, through Ombudsman spokesperson and Assistant Ombudsman Ernesto Nocos, denied Abadia's accusations.

"The Ombudsman will not allow himself to be used by anybody. He has always been cautious and impartial," said Nocos, adding that the Ombudsman's office is continuing its investigation of Garcia in preparation for the filing of plunder charges against him.

Abadia said he learned of Arroyo's alleged move against him through his connections, which he called "James Bonds," in the government and military.

Unfair

He said it was unfair for Arroyo to go after him when he supported then Vice President Macapagal-Arroyo during the second Edsa people power uprising that put the President in power.

He also questioned why the government was going after his P11-million increase in assets when there were bigger issues that needed its attention, including the overpriced President Diosdado Macapagal Boulevard and the Jose Pidal controversy, which he said involved huge amounts of money.

"But the issue on these matter died down recently, why?" Abadia said.

In ordering the filing of charges and forfeiture proceedings against Abadia, Marcelo pointed to the dramatic increase in his net worth from P670,000 in 1991 to P7,135,000 in 1993, as reflected in his statement of assets and liabilities.

After assuming his post as AFP chief in April 1991, Abadia's declared net worth increased from P3.7 million in 1991 to P6.4 million in 1992 to P13.6 million in 1993.

Abadia explained the increase as having come from the sale of high-end properties and shares in a gas company, but Marcelo said these were either unsubstantiated by evidence or were questionable.

Abadia said in the telephone interview that he had deeds of sale and income tax payments to prove these sales.

He also claims to belong to a landed family in Talisay, Cebu and had recently sold properties for P5.4 million.

"My grandfather is one of the biggest landowners in my town," he said.

Garcia shared the loot, says Navy ex-captain

By Gil Cabacungan Jr.

A MEMBER of the Reform the Armed Forces Movement (RAM) said Maj. Gen. Carlos Garcia could only have amassed that much fortune from kickbacks from military contracts and with the connivance of higher officials and even lawmakers.

In an interview with reporters in Malacañang, retired Navy Capt. Proceso L. Maligalig said that Garcia could not have amassed his unexplained wealth of P143 million from mere "conversion" of military supplies into cash.

Maligalig, the president of the state-owned Bataan Shipyard & Engineering Co., said kickbacks from conversion were just "crumbs" compared to the "real money" to be made from dollar contracts for the military's various modernization programs.

"The investigators should look at all the military contracts that were made during Garcia's term," said Maligalig who noted that most of the deals were by American suppliers that want to finalize the deal quickly.

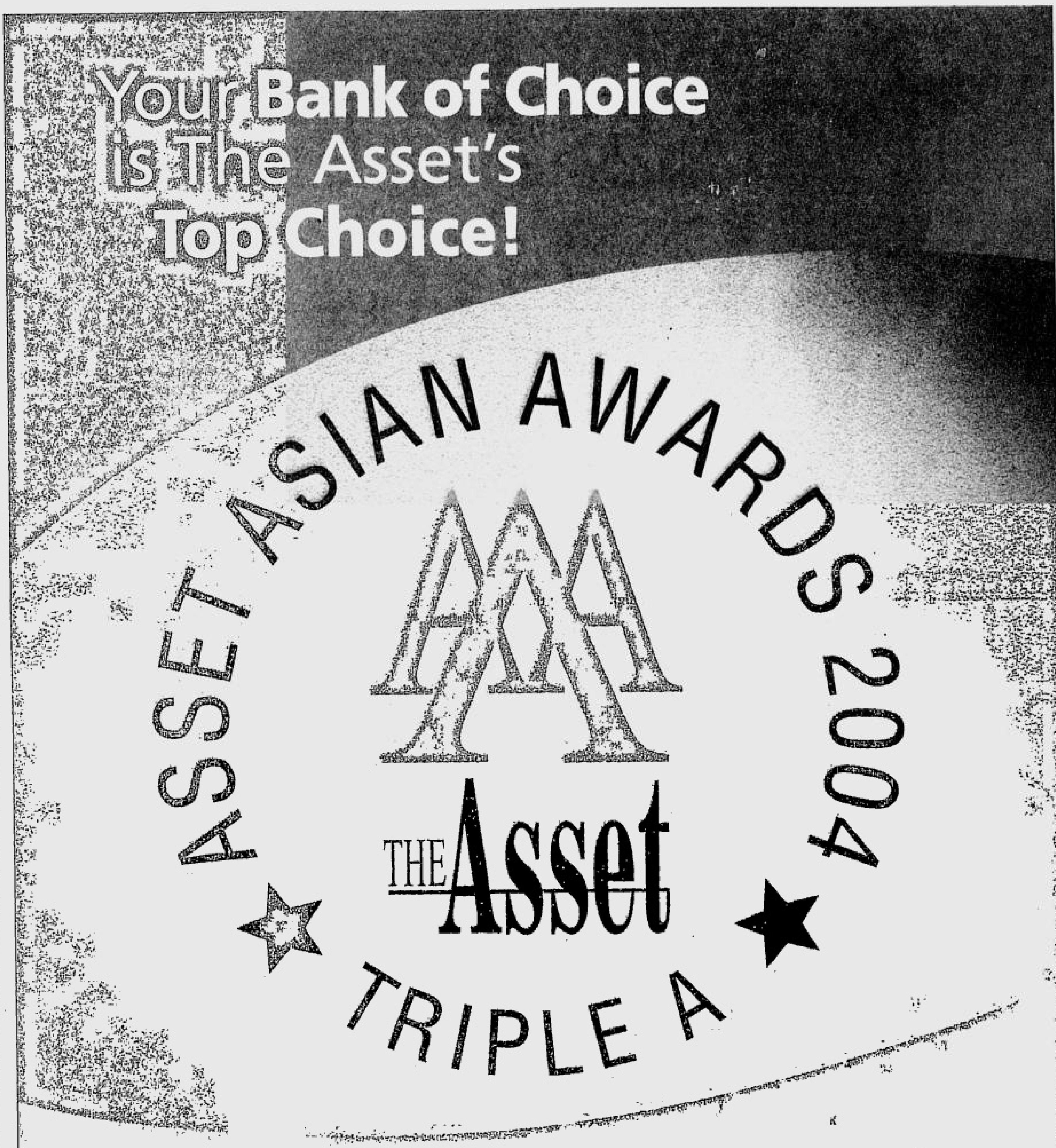
Maligalig said that probers could also look at the culpability of Garcia's superiors, specifically the five AFP chief of staffs that he served under.

"He could not have done this without the knowledge of an approving authority. He was just a comptroller," Maligalig said.

Also, Maligalig said that some lawmakers might also be involved in military corruption considering that a congressional committee oversees the award of major military modernization contracts.

Maligalig is convinced that Garcia would eventually spill the beans on who were into his scheme. "He has ten different accounts in the same bank. Why would he do that if he is not holding the money for somebody? He's biggest mistake is putting it all under his name," Maligalig said.

Garcia has pleaded pleaded not guilty before a military court trying him for corruption specifically for unbecoming conduct and indiscipline, relating to an alleged false declaration of assets.



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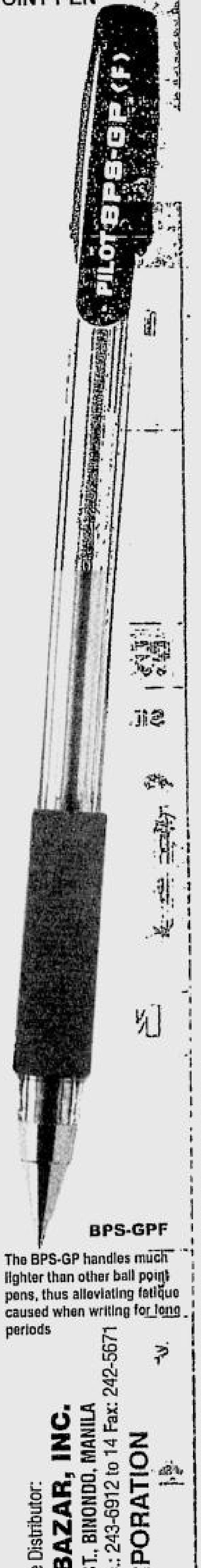

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The WORLD

Editor Luverne B. Gueco

UN unveils sweeping reforms

UNITED NATIONS—The United Nations on Tuesday unveiled a sweeping proposal to overhaul the organization, including the Security Council, in what would be the most comprehensive UN reform since its founding in 1945.

After bitter divisions over the war in Iraq, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan ordered a high-level panel last year to come up with the blueprint and help the United Nations adapt to the global realities of the 21st century.

The panel's report released Tuesday proposed more than 100 recommendations, including some—an expansion of the Security Council and a definition of terrorism—that have eluded UN diplomats for years.

"What is needed is a comprehensive system of collective security, one that tackles both old and new threats, and addresses the security concerns of all states—rich and poor, weak and strong," Annan said in his preface to the report.

He said the proposals, which must be approved by member nations, set out "a broad framework for collective security and indeed gives a broader meaning to that concept appropriate for the new millennium."

In setting out a blueprint for collective security decisions, the report also takes implicit aim at the United States over the Iraq war, which was strongly opposed by Annan and many Security Council member states.

"There is little evident international acceptance of the idea of security being best preserved by a balance of power or by any single—even benignly motivated—superpower," the panel said.

"The yearning for an international system governed by the rule of law has grown," it said. "No state, no matter how powerful, can by its own efforts alone make itself invulnerable to today's threats."

Annan intends to use the report as a basis for widespread reforms he would like to see carried out before his tenure ends in 2006, and he commissioned it while acknowledging that divisions over Iraq had brought the international system to a "fork in the road."

The panel said that while the Security Council may need to be more proactive in addressing the "nightmare scenarios" combining terrorists, weapons of mass destruction and "irresponsible" nations, any preventive action taken without an imminent threat should still require the council's approval.

The United States did not have the Security Council's backing when it launched the invasion that brought down Saddam Hussein, and Annan has called the war illegal.

Revamping the Security Council, the top UN decision-making body, is likely to be the most contentious issue, and the panel came up with two competing proposals for expanding the council's membership to 24 seats.

One method would add six new permanent members to the council, which has had the same five permanent states—Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States—since the United Nations was founded in the wake of World War II. *AFP*

Obscure UN body set for abolition

UNITED NATIONS—A decade after it ran out of things to do, an obscure and obsolete UN agency called the Trusteeship Council is finally targeted for extinction.

A high-level panel on UN reform, in a report made public on Tuesday, said the UN Charter, drafted in 1945 and rarely altered since then, should be rewritten to put the five-nation council out of its misery.

The Trusteeship Council was created to supervise the administration of 11 territories inherited from the long-defunct League of Nations as well as some colonies taken from Italy and Japan at the end of World War Two.

Its last ward, the western Pacific nation of Palau, became self-governing in October 1994, prompting the council to suspend its operations a month later.

Since then, it has rarely met.

Its five members—the United States, China, Russia, Britain and France—last got together on Oct. 20 to elect French Deputy Ambassador Michel Duclos as its president and British Deputy Ambassador Adam Thomson as its vice president.

By tradition, the post rotates every two years between the French and British deputy ambassadors.

The president's sole obligation these days is to have lunch once a year with Annan, along with the heads of the other main UN bodies. The rotation gives the French and the British an equal chance to attend the annual luncheons, diplomats said.

But the council has remained alive because to abolish it would involve a change in the charter, and diplomats have hesitated to reopen that weighty document until they could agree on how to restructure the 15-nation Security Council.

The high-level panel, created by UN Secretary General Kofi Annan in 2003, has put forward two different options for restructuring the Security Council as well as the call for the Trusteeship Council's abolition. If all goes according to plan, which is extremely unlikely, the reform package would be adopted in late 2005. *Reuters*

Ukraine parliament votes to sack pro-Russia gov't

KIEV—Ukraine's parliament on Wednesday voted to sack the government of Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovich, boosting opposition efforts to end a political crisis triggered by his contested election last month as president.

"This is a victory not only for the opposition, but for the entire Ukrainian people," opposition deputy Roman Zvarych said.

Deputies also voted to create an interim "government of national trust."

The vote, passed at the second attempt through secret ballot, came just before the start of efforts by international mediators to help settle the crisis which threatens to tear apart Ukraine.

Earlier, outgoing President Leonid Kuchma made clear he would not easily yield in his battle with the opposition by rejecting its key demand that the Nov. 21 presidential run-off his protege won be held again.

"Any rerun would simply be a farce. I cannot see it in any other way and I will never support it as it would be unconstitutional," he told a meeting of economic officials.

After Tuesday's talks collapsed between opposition and government factions, protesters clad in the orange campaign colors of opposition leader Viktor Yushchenko marched to the assembly, hoping for a resolution to allow a new poll.

The opposition, which says Yanukovich won through fraud, pulled out of talks with authorities and vowed to use "People Power" to win demands for a new election soon.

The Supreme Court was sitting for a third day to decide whether the election was fraudulent.

If it rules in favor of the opposition, the Central Election Commission will have to revoke the victory it handed to Yanukovich and can then either set a repeat vote or a completely new election which would take up to three months to complete.

US President George W. Bush called for a peaceful resolution to the crisis that has triggered mass street protests and threatened to tear apart the former Soviet republic.

Bush said he had spoken by telephone to Polish President Aleksander Kwasniewski, one of the international mediators trying to broker a way out of a standoff that has paralyzed government and is beginning to hit Ukraine's economy.

The sides have been deadlocked, neither with quite enough power to deliver the final blow and aware that one false step could trigger mass violence in a country which has voted largely along linguistic and cultural lines.

So bitter has the political debate become that the losing side faces being completely shut out of power. "It's very important that violence not break out there, and it's important that the will of the people be heard," Bush told reporters.

Kuchma, who has warned the economy could collapse, was meeting officials to consider measures to stabilize the financial markets.

His 10-year rule tarnished by scandal and poor economic management, the president has suggested he might yield to pressure and a new election.

But he has suggested staging a new poll from scratch, a process which would keep him in office beyond his current term. *Reuters*

FILE photo taken June 17, 1997 shows Princess Diana listening to speaker Ken Rutherford who was injured by a land mine in Somalia. A videotape of the late princess talking frankly about her sex life was 'bumped off' was broadcast on US television late Nov. 29. AFP

Princess Diana hits out at Charles in videotape

NEW YORK—Princess Diana was "traumatized" by Prince Charles' refusal to publicly declare his love for her on the day of their engagement and became bulimic to punish herself for their failed marriage.

Diana vented her feelings about her life and the British royal family in a videotape made in 1992 by her public speaking coach, former actor Peter Settelen, and broadcast on Monday for the first time in an NBC News special.

The princess, who was killed in a car crash in Paris in 1997, discussed her childhood, marriage to Charles, whom she divorced in 1996, and struggle with bulimia in the one-hour program. A second installment will air next Monday.

Diana spoke of an early warning about Prince Charles' commitment to her during a "ghastly" TV interview they did in 1981 on the day they announced their engagement to the world.

"This ridiculous ITN man said, 'Are you in love?' So I thought, 'Oh, what a thick question,'" she said.

"And Charles turned around and said, 'Whatever "in love" means.' And that threw me completely," she said. "God. Absolutely traumatized me."

Diana, speaking from her couch in her Kensington Palace sitting room, expressed frustration with family members she turned to during troubled times of the marriage.

"I wanted to throttle that stepmother of mine because she brought such grief," Diana said about Countess Raine Spencer.

"She kept saying to me, 'Oh, but Diana, you're so unhappy in your own marriage, you're just jealous of Daddy's and my relationship.'"

She said she confronted Queen Elizabeth in 1986 after she learned that Charles was having an affair with his longtime paramour, Camilla Parker-Bowles.

"I went to the Top Lady, and I'm sobbing. And I said, 'What do I do? I'm coming to you. What do I do?' And she said, 'I don't know what you should do. Charles is hopeless.'" *Reuters*

November one of deadliest months for US forces in Iraq

BAGHDAD—A US soldier and four Iraqi civilians were killed in Iraq in a spate of attacks that capped off the month of November, one of the deadliest months since the US-led invasion.

Prime Minister Iyad Allawi traveled Tuesday to Jordan and is to hold informal meetings with representatives of Iraqi tribes and businessmen before heading off Thursday to Berlin and Moscow, a coordinator of the gathering said on Tuesday.

In a gesture toward Sunni opposition groups and organizations with possible ties to the insurgency, Allawi is to meet with some 120 exiled Iraqi opposition figures in Amman on Dec. 8, said the coordinator, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

The Iraqi government was also trying to muster support from its neighbors to secure its borders and improve security before the elections, but traded recriminations at a conference with their Iranian hosts over which side was not doing enough to fight terrorism.

A roadside bomb attack on a US military vehicle north of Baghdad left one soldier dead, the military said, bringing the American death toll for November alone to 134.

The toll is one shy of the record of April 2004, when US forces were also facing insurgents on several fronts, including Falluja.

According to Pentagon figures, the latest death brought to 1,251 the total number of US troops killed in Iraq since the launch of the US-led invasion in March 2003.

US and Iraqi forces have been involved in simultaneous assaults on Sunni insurgent strongholds across Iraq in November, with bids to reclaim the cities of Falluja and Mosul and a vast sweep of the so-called "death triangle" south of Baghdad.

Although accurate counts were unavailable, one of the highest Iraqi tolls was also recorded in November.

A senior official said last week that more than 2,000 people had been killed during the fighting in Falluja alone, although there was no breakdown of rebel and civilian deaths.

According to witnesses, more than 40 mostly expatriate Iraqis stranded at a northern crossing point with Turkey since the government closed the borders for the Falluja operation drowned Tuesday in the Tigris when their barge capsized.

Amid the relentless violence, Allawi nevertheless took heart in the fact that no major car bombs had ripped through Baghdad in recent weeks and claimed that the general level of violence had dropped since the Falluja operation.

"The level of criminal operations has receded and is continuing to drop following the operation in Falluja," which was launched on Nov. 8, Allawi said on state-owned Iraqiya television.

Several major Iraqi parties argued Friday that security conditions did not allow the organization of viable polls across the country and called for a six-month delay.

But the interim authorities rejected the idea, saying everything would be done to hold the elections on Jan. 30 as scheduled.

Delay opponents argue that the legitimacy deficit of the current hand-picked administration is one of the factors fueling support for the insurgency, and say there is no guarantee security conditions will be better in six months.

In a move which could potentially shape the future political landscape of Iraq, Shiite officials announced that a list backed by Grand Ayatollah al-Sistani would be presented to the electoral commission on Wednesday.

Sistani—the highest religious Shiite authority in Iraq—is one of the most powerful and popular figures in the country and commentators argue that any list endorsed by Sistani would be favorites in the polls.

At a conference in Tehran, Iraq's interim Vice President Ibrahim al-Jafari said he believed Iran had to do more to secure the lengthy border in order to prevent the transit of foreign fighters. *AFP*

US Homeland Security chief Ridge resigns

WASHINGTON—Tom Ridge, who led a massive reorganization of the US government to bolster domestic defenses after the Sept. 11 attacks, resigned Tuesday as the country's first secretary of homeland security.

Ridge, whose resignation was widely expected after President George W. Bush's reelection, said he would serve until Feb. 1 unless his successor is confirmed before then.

"I will always be grateful for the opportunity to serve my country with this president as its leader," Ridge told a press conference, calling his tenure an "incredible period since Sept. 11, 2001."

Ridge, 59, hailed the new department's efforts to improve America's domestic security defenses, citing the introduction of the color-coded alert system, ramped up border security procedures and stiffer security at US airports.

"I think this homeland security advisory system has matured to a point where it serves two purposes," Ridge said of the alert system, which some critics allege has been used for political purposes.

"It is just a general signal to America generally" that "the threat tomorrow is greater than today," Ridge said. *AFP*

US senator calls for Annan's resignation

WASHINGTON—A US senator heading a panel investigating the UN's scandal-plagued Iraq oil-for-food program called for UN chief Kofi Annan's resignation in a Wall Street Journal opinion piece released Tuesday.

"It's time for UN Secretary General Kofi Annan to resign," Republican Sen. Norm Coleman, chair of the Senate investigations subcommittee, wrote in the article to be published Wednesday.

"I have arrived at this conclusion because the most extensive fraud in the history of the UN occurred on his watch," the Minnesota senator wrote.

He added that "as long as Mr. Annan remains in charge, the world will never be able to learn the full extent of the bribes, kickbacks and under-the-table payments that took place under the UN's collective nose."

ANNAN

The oil-for-food program, launched in December 1996 and terminated in November 2003, was intended to ease the effects on Iraqis of the international sanctions imposed on the regime of Saddam Hussein.

It allowed Iraq to sell oil under UN supervision to buy food and humanitarian supplies, and eventually developed into the largest aid scheme in UN history.

But US congressional investigators say Saddam's regime may have skimmed billions of dollars from the program, and allegations have surfaced of payoffs to officials and private individuals from around the globe.

Annan has appointed the former head of the US federal banking system, Paul Volcker, to lead an enquiry into the allegations.

In his article, Coleman also mentioned Annan's son Kojo, who received payments from a Swiss company linked to the scandal.

"Recently, there are growing, albeit unproven, allegations that Kofi Annan himself not only understands his son's role in this scandal—but that he has been less than forthcoming in what he knew, and when he knew it," Coleman wrote. *AFP*

Asia vows to fight harder to stop spread of AIDS

BANGKOK—Activists handed out condoms to passers-by and pamphlets urging people not to inject drugs, challenging conservative social mores in Asia as the region marked World AIDS' Day on Wednesday with vows to fight harder to halt the disease's spread.

In China, the government signaled it was heeding dire warnings of an AIDS explosion this decade by broadcasting television footage of President Hu Jintao making a rare visit to AIDS patients in a hospital and ordering thousands of local officials to learn about the disease.

Like many countries in Asia, China has been criticized for being slow to admit that AIDS is a growing problem and for leaving public health systems ill-equipped to deal with it.

National infection rates are lower in Asia than in other parts of the world—particularly worst-hit Africa—but the large populations of many countries in the region mean vast numbers of people are stricken. The epidemic has claimed about 540,000 lives in Asia so far this year.

Chinese President Hu Jintao shook hands with AIDS patients during Tuesday's highly publicized hospital visit. On Wednesday, he called on "leaders of various levels to enhance their HIV/AIDS knowledge," the official Xinhua News Agency said.

China says it has an estimated 840,000 people infected with the AIDS virus and 84,000 who have the full-blown disease. The UN AIDS agency has warned that China could have as many as 10 million people infected by 2010 if it doesn't take urgent action.

Elsewhere in Asia, health officials stressed that women are the most vulnerable.

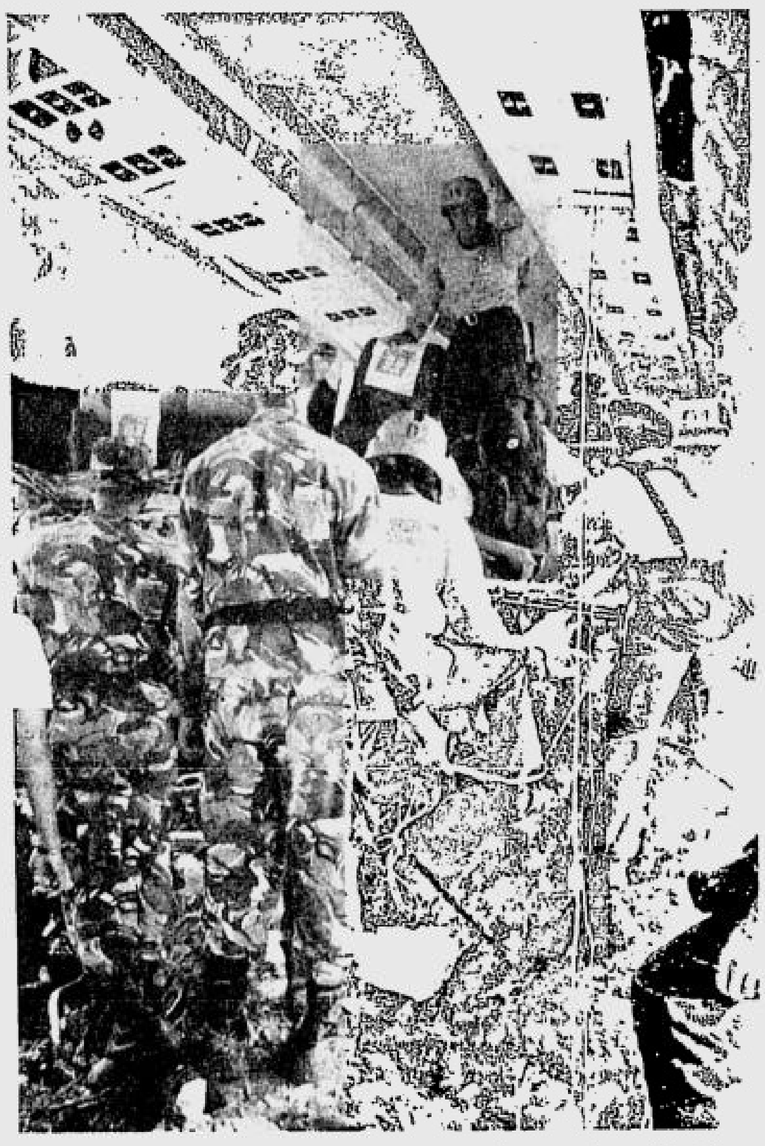
Some 47 percent of the 45 million people worldwide infected with HIV are female, and women in East Asia are contracting the disease at a faster rate, often because men who visit prostitutes are increasingly passing on the virus to their wives, the United Nations warned last week.

Health workers, patients and volunteers in Thailand—one of the countries hardest hit by the disease and among the first to launch preventative campaigns—were due to march through the streets of the capital, Bangkok.

About 600,000 people have died of AIDS in Thailand, where about 572,000 others live with the disease. Thai health authorities are providing free generic anti-retroviral drugs to about 50,000 people this year.

In the Philippines, gay men—one wearing only shorts adorned with multicolored condoms—strutted before the press Tuesday to promote HIV testing. Marches and a clothing donation drive were held in Vietnam, where alarming new infection rates have been reported in low-risk groups such as pregnant women.

Activists in Tokyo began handing out condoms and about 20,000 pamphlets in the streets, and a popular nightclub was planning a benefit concert for Wednesday night. *AP*



INDONESIAN rescue teams search the wreckage of the cabin of an Indonesian McDonnell-Douglas MD-82 operated by local carrier Lion Air that skidded off a runway in the central Java town of Solo Wednesday. REUTERS

26 killed, 40 injured in Indon plane crash

SOLO, Indonesia—Investigators picked through the wreckage of an Indonesian passenger plane that crashed after skidding off the runway in stormy weather, killing at least 26 people in the county's worst air accident in six years.

At least 40 others were injured when the budget carrier Lion Air plane smashed through a fence at the end of the runway and ended up in a graveyard outside Adi Sumarmo airport in Solo Tuesday, airline workers and police said.

Authorities initially said that 32 people were killed, but later revised the toll to 26.

The aircraft was carrying 141 passengers and five crew members. Police said 23 passengers remained unaccounted for, but rescue workers said it was unlikely that any more bodies would be found at the scene.

The body of the pilot of the MD-82 was recovered early Wednesday, said airline spokesperson Hasyim Arsal.

State airline safety investigators were examining the plane and collecting pieces of the fuselage. The aircraft suffered major damage to its nose and rear.

Several people being treated for injuries in hospital said they had unfastened their seatbelts when they felt the plane touch down. Arsal said this contributed to the high death toll.

"Everyone panicked and was shouting hysterically," said survivor Dedi, who was being treated in hospital on Wednesday with a broken leg. "People thought the plane was going to explode." Dedi goes by a single name.

The plane's Dutch co-pilot was seriously injured in the crash, Arsal said.

The airline, meanwhile, blamed bad weather for the accident. *AP*

WORLDBRIEFS

Egypt, Israel discuss Gaza withdrawal

JERUSALEM—Egypt's foreign minister and Israel's prime minister on Wednesday discussed the terms of a planned Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip in 2005, including the deployment of hundreds of Egyptian troops to ensure calm along the volatile Egypt-Gaza border. Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmed Aboul Gheit was also expected to tell Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon that Syria is ready to resume peace talks with Israel. Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak met Tuesday with Syrian President Bashar Assad. Israel is interested in Egyptian help because it fears a Gaza withdrawal will leave a security vacuum, particularly in Gaza, which has been plagued by increasing chaos in recent months. Egypt is ready to deploy 750 troops on the border with Gaza to stop Palestinians from smuggling arms into the Gaza Strip, senior Israeli officials said Wednesday. Israel will most likely accept this, but has not yet made a final decision, the officials said on condition of anonymity. *AP*

6 Americans killed in Afghan plane crash

KABUL—The US military confirmed Wednesday that three US military personnel and three American civilian crew were killed when their plane crashed at the weekend in central Afghanistan. "The aircraft was located late Tuesday—it was up in the mountains in Bamiyan," military spokesperson Major Mark McCann said. "We also discovered all six people on board dead." The fixed-wing, twin-engined CASA-212 transporter went missing on Saturday after taking off from US military headquarters at Bagram airfield outside Kabul. McCann would not give any details of the crash but said an investigation had been launched to find out the cause of the incident. However military spokesperson Col. Pam Keeton said: "We do not suspect any hostile fire." She added that all those on board were Americans. Bamiyan—the site of two gigantic Buddha statues destroyed by the Taliban in March 2001—is 200 km northwest of Kabul. *AFP*

Soldiers seize attorney general's office

CANCUN, Mexico—About 30 soldiers seized the federal attorney general's office in this resort city Tuesday, questioning its staff about the recent killings of nine people, including three federal agents. Mexico's top drug and organized crime prosecutor, Jose Luis Santiago Vasconcelos, flew to Cancun, arriving shortly after the soldiers moved in on the offices. He entered the building briefly, then later told reporters that all federal employees there were under investigation in the discovery of nine bodies last week outside Cancun. Five corpses were found Nov. 25 with gunshot wounds to the head on a dirt road just south of Cancun, famous the world over for its white-sand beaches, swim-up hotel pool bars and eardrum pounding night clubs. Authorities recovered an abandoned car nearby. Three of the victims—Luis Octavio Guzman, Roberto Alcantara and Fernando Perez—were members of the elite Federal Agency of Investigation, the Mexican equivalent of the FBI. Another four charred bodies were discovered in the trunk of a burned-out car parked in an illegal dump near the highway between Cancun and the city of Merida, about 10 km from the Cancun airport. A day later, two Federal Agency of Investigation agents who were wounded but alive were discovered before dawn outside Cancun. Both had gunshot wounds to the legs and one also had a broken leg. *AP*

Death toll at China mine blast hits 166

BEIJING—The death toll in a massive coal mine explosion in north China has risen to 166, making it the worst mining disaster in the country's recent history, local officials said Wednesday.

"This morning they made the announcement to a handful of reporters at the command center," Yan Mangxue, the party secretary for a nearby village where 14 of the dead miners are from, said.

"They made the conclusion because there's no chance anyone would survive. They haven't told the relatives yet. The relatives still don't know."

A total of 293 workers were underground at the mine in Tongchuan city, Shaanxi province, when the accident happened Sunday. Some 127 miners escaped.

Investigators determined that a back-to-back gas blast and coal-dust explosion knocked out all ventilation systems in the pit, state media said.

"In an environment with a high density of coal gas and carbon monoxide, it is impossible that the miners still trapped underground can survive," Hou Shichang, head of the Shaanxi province coal mine industry administration told a press conference in Tongchuan Wednesday, according to Xinhua news agency.

Hundreds of miners' family members, many of whom had traveled from other parts of Shaanxi to the scene, had prepared for the worst after keeping vigil outside the shaft for the past three days.

"The relatives all realized there was no hope," retired miner Feng Zhijie said.

Local officials Tuesday persuaded the relatives to leave the scene and took them in vans to a nearby mine, apparently to avoid media coverage and to better control them, said Feng.

Anger at the mine's poor attention to safety had spilled over into a beating incident involving a mine official, Feng said.

"Families were crying and collapsed on the ground. Journalists tried to film the scene. A mine official came out and said there should be no more interviewing. Several young men then punched the official," said Feng.

The official was not seriously hurt, he said.

Yan said local officials like himself had been asked to begin informing the families that their relatives were dead. *AFP*

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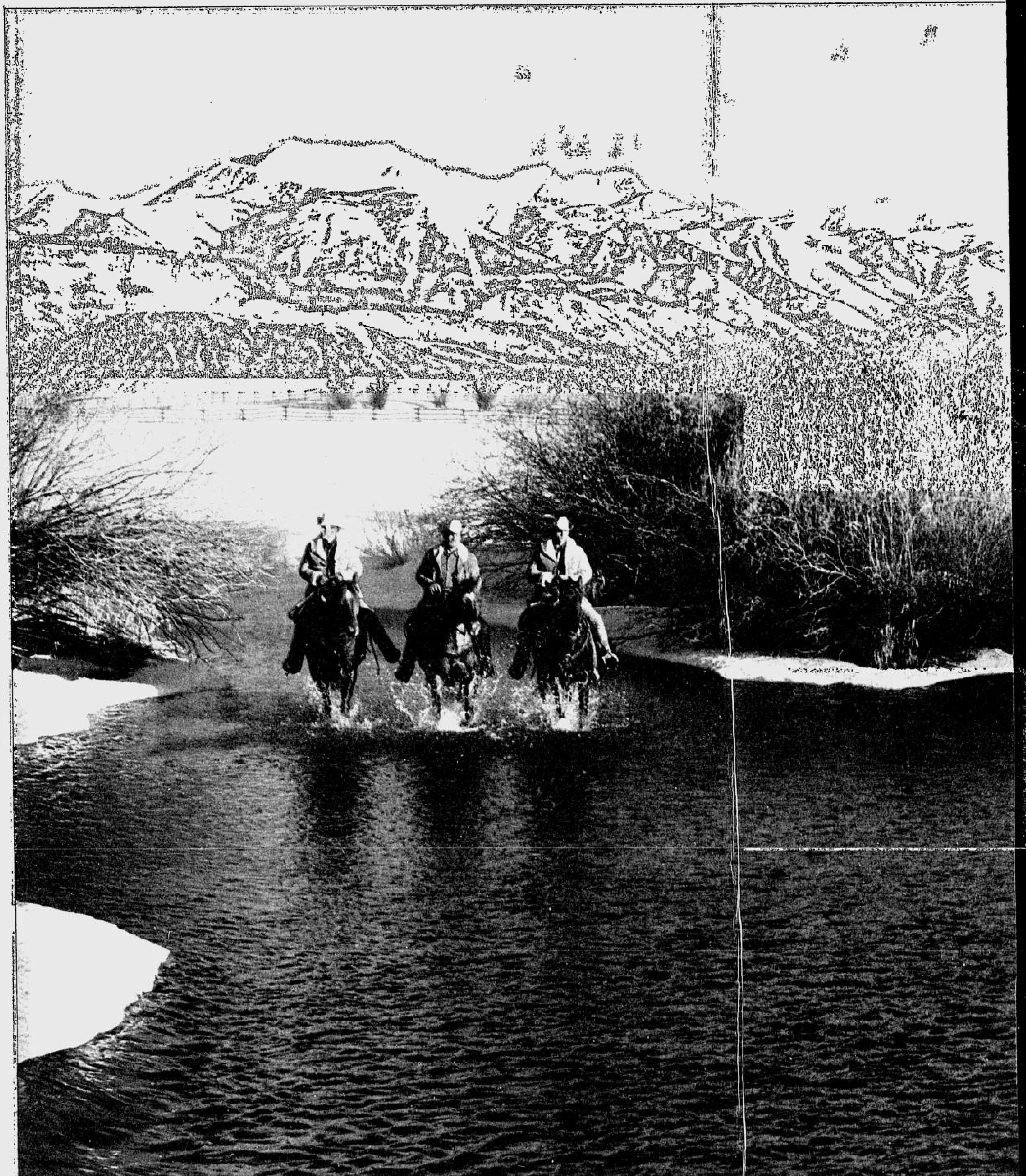

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Government Warnin
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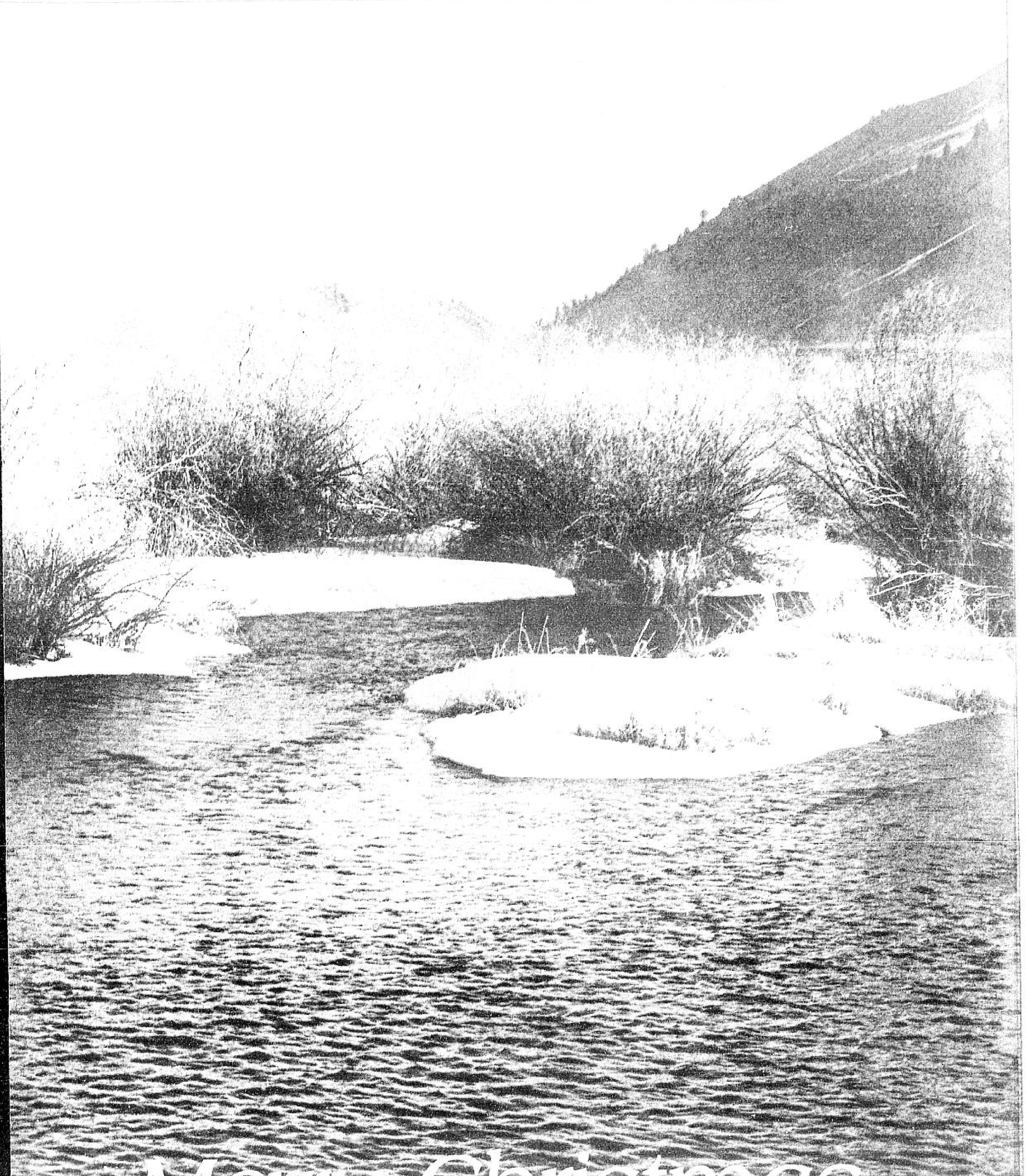
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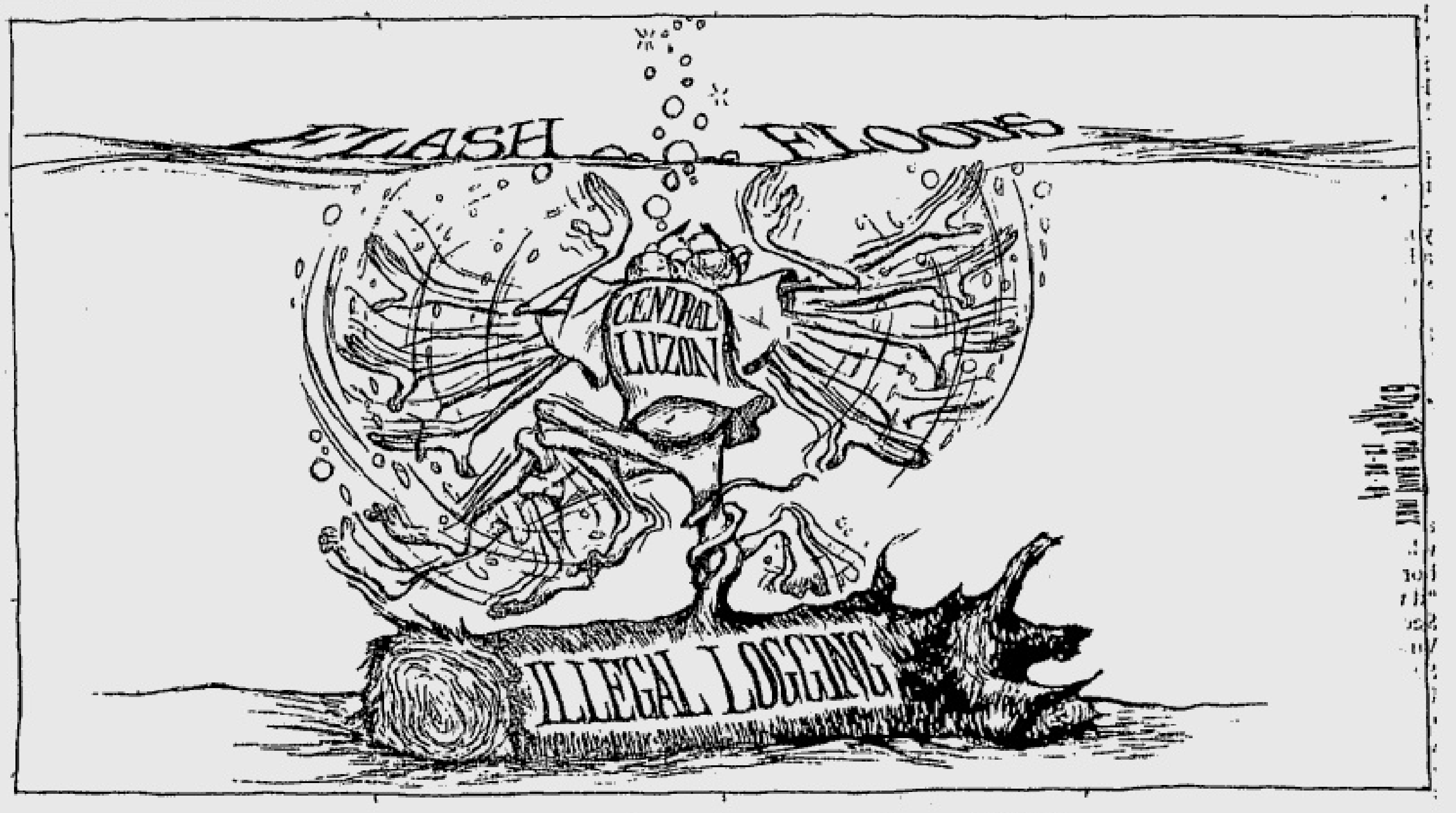


Promises to keep

EDITORIAL

IN A COUNTRY lashed by 20 typhoons a year on the average, some of them blowing as hard as 150 kilometers per hour or more, hardly anybody pays heed when a tropical depression comes. Thus, when Pagasa issued Storm Signal No. 1 as "Winnie" blew over Samar Sunday night, the newspapers relegated the news to the inside pages, and people living in its path largely ignored the routine advice to watch out for landslides and floods. After all, Winnie was merely a tropical depression, with maximum winds of 50 kph.

But what Winnie lacked in wind strength it more than made up in water power. Over a 24-hour period beginning early Monday, it brought down as much as 20 centimeters of rain over a wide area extending from Bicol all the way up north to Central Luzon. To make matters worse, Winnie followed almost the same path as two earlier weather disturbances: typhoon Unding which struck two weeks earlier and tropical depression Violeta which hit only last week. Thus, weathermen said, Winnie's long and heavy downpour fell on soil that was already soaked and softened by Unding and Violeta, causing massive landslides and deep and widespread flooding in many cities and towns, especially in the provinces of Quezon, Nueva Ecija and Aurora.

As a result, 306 people have been reported killed in just three towns of Quezon—Real, Infanta and General Nakar. Other places reported 39 deaths from landslides, drowning or electrocution. But the death toll is expected to rise some more, possibly even exceeding 500, since scores remained missing as of yesterday, more than 150 of them from Real alone.

So how could a "weak" tropical depression leave so much death and destruction? Of course, there was that unlucky combination of unusually heavy rainfall coming down on soil already saturated with water. But as so many observers have pointed out, the landslides and the floods would not have been so destructive and deadly if there were still trees to store the water and hold back the soil. If further evidence is needed that illegal logging continues in the increasingly rare parts of the country where trees remain standing, all one has to do is look at the pictures of logs snagged on fallen bridges.

Now in the wake of another tragedy, government officials—from mayors and governors to the environment secretary and the President—are threatening to go after those who are responsible for the destruction of our forests and watersheds. President Macapagal-Arroyo, who had cut short her trip to Laos for the Asean Summit on account of the disaster, yesterday announced "a nationwide crackdown against illegal loggers and their financiers." She said "illegal logging must now be placed in the order of the most serious crimes against the people." She described the recent landslides and floods as a "wake-up call" and urged everyone "to join hands in preserving the environment and stepping up reforestation."

It has become a cliché of course to describe a tragedy as a wake-up call. That was what everyone said after Ormoc City was inundated by a sudden flood that left more than 5,000 people dead in 1991. That was what people said in December last year when heavy rains caused landslides in Southern Leyte killing at least 150 people. The problem is that after the public weeping and gnashing of teeth, everyone goes back to sleep. Only a few stay on their toes to watch over our forests and enforce our environmental laws.

These laws are tough enough. Killing a tree merits almost the same penalty as killing a man, for instance. But has anyone heard about somebody being convicted of illegal logging? Has anyone been charged in connection with the Liloan killer landslide? Has anyone ever been convicted for having abetted the Ormoc mass drowning?

Before they go to sleep, only to wake up to another tragedy, the President and other officials should be reminded that they have promises to keep.

Do our clocks strike 13?

VIEWPOINT

Juan L. Mercado

IS the flawed textbooks scandal merely about quick-buck-publishers and slipshod research? Or is it about Orwellian flushing of truth down "memory holes" in a society where the "clocks strike 13"?

That question underpins INQUIRER reporter Dona Pazzibugan's reports on error-studded textbooks. It took 22 historians and academics, working overtime, four weeks to blue-pencil one book. Another book blacked out historical upheavals, like People Power—now reverberating in Ukraine, after Georgia, East Germany, Czechoslovakia and Indonesia.

"The first step in liquidating a people is to erase its memory," Milan Hubl wrote. So were Ferdinand Marcos' brutal dictatorship and Joseph Estrada's boozy corrupt regimes shoved into "memory holes"?

In his novel "1984," the Observer's Eric Blair, who wrote as George Orwell, sketched a fictional dictatorship's ultimate weapon: "memory holes." These devices obliterated "even scraps of paper" not devoted to propaganda.

Orwell also coined "double think," "newspeak" and "Big Brother," the predecessor of North Korea's "Dear Leader." So thoroughly did he "describe methods of totalitarian thought control, that the adjective Orwellian now forms part of everyday language," a literary encyclopedia notes.

Memory disintegrated at the hands of Orwell's "thought-police." In "1984," lies become truth as words lose their meaning. "Slavery is freedom." Dissidents were tortured in "Room 101." In Orwell-land, clocks strike 13.

But Imelda insists that "martial law was the most democratic period in our history." Marcos' Military Intelligence Security Group was our "Room 101."

Democracy grows out the barrel of a gun, proclaim coup plotters, from Juan Ponce Enrile of "God-Save-The-Queen" schemes to the Magdalo mutineers. "Operation Ahos" and other communist pogroms safeguarded the "people's war," Filipino commissars claim. "A blanket of paranoia engulfed the movement," says former rebel Robert Francis Garcia in his book, "To Suffer Thy Comrades." And a levy is not a tax, the dictionary notwithstanding, the coconut cartel argue. The clock strikes 13.

A textbook ignores 12 other presidents and discusses only Transparency International's Marcos and Estrada. It presents Erap's background, platform of government and State of the Nation Address promises. Period. The aborted impeachment trial and Edsa II are nowhere.

Marcos founded the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, a book asserts. It ignored President Diosdado Macapagal who, with Malaysia and Indonesia, forged Maphilindo, Asean's forerunner. It also endorses Proclamation 1081. To dampen threats to security, Marcos was compelled to use "absolute power, so he declared martial law."

What "memory holes" fail to delete, Orwellian "double think" twists. Public school textbooks distort the martial law record, University of Asia and the Pacific's Joel Sarmenta and Melvin Yabut told the 1999 Ateneo/Wisconsin Universities "Conference on Legacies of the Marcos Dictatorship."

In these taxpayer-paid-for books, dissent such as the "First Quarter Storm" is depicted as chaos. Militarization and the thousands of *desparacedos* (salvage and torture victims) are ignored. There is nothing on mass arrests or padlocking of a free press, so similar to the junta-ruled Myanmar of today.

"The end result was that the generation born after Sept. 21, 1972—now comprising over 13 percent of the entire population—are the 8.3 million students using these (fatally flawed) textbooks," their study notes.

"Who controls the past, controls the future," Orwell noted. "Who controls the present controls the past."

Thus, Stalin's regime rewrote history as often as its purges. Glorified accounts of the secret police's Lavrenti Beria were erased after his assassination. Japan remains embroiled in textbooks that tiptoe around the "Rape of Nanking." Denials that the Holocaust occurred persist.

A youth scrubbed of memory will take it for granted that the clock strikes 13. Can a people, afflicted by tax-subsidized amnesia ever become a purposeful nation? "The struggle of man against power," Czech novelist Milan Kundera wrote, "is the struggle against forgetting."

History is a "dangerous, often subversive subject—it opens minds," INQUIRER columnist and historian Ambeth Ocampo writes. "But myths and distortions warp the present crop of history textbooks and presentation of martial law."

No action was ever taken—until Marian School supervisor Antonio Calipjo-Go blew the whistle in a June 6 letter to the INQUIRER. For that he was first branded as a publicity seeker, ignored by the education department, and threatened with libel charges.

"In this country, those who horsewhip money changers out of the temple, end up excoriated," I wrote here last Aug. 5. Acsa Ramirez, who exposed Land Bank tax scams, ended in a police lineup. For denouncing the purchase of sub-standard Kelvar helmets, flawed HK-MP5 assault rifles, Rear Adm. Guillermo Wong was shipped out. There are hundreds of such cases.

"Governments must create an environment that encourages, instead of penalizes, citizens who denounce venalities," 135 countries declared at the 9th Anti-Corruption Conference in Durham, South Africa.

For the first time since its creation in 1995, the National Book Development Board has ordered a textbook's pullout due to gross errors. Corrected teaching notes are being shipped to the 5,700 public high schools. These are slow and overdue measures to prevent the clock from striking 13.

* * *

E-mail: juan_mercado@pacific.net.ph

Cruel year

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

THIS year has been another cruel year for the arts.

First it was Wilfrido "Ding" Nolledo, who died of pancreatic cancer in San Fernando Valley, California. Few may know him, especially today when literature has been replaced by karaoke, but there was a time, before martial law, when his name rang loudly along with Nick Joaquin, N.V.M. Gonzalez, Bienvenido Santos, and other local literary greats. When he died, he was in the midst of finishing another novel, entitled "A Cappella Dawn." We are truly impoverished, though I imagine it is fortune enough for us to have it even in that form.

We met briefly before martial law in Asia-Philippines Leader and worked together, also all too briefly, in the Daily Globe before he decided to pack his bags for the US in 1989. He was a quiet and intense person, though quick to smile or laugh. He looked at the world with the eyes of a child, reveling in its wonders and awed by its tragedies. He was sorry to go, he said before he left, but having to work for a living was cutting into the time he lived to work—writing. I wished him all the best in the world, and meant it.

Then last May, it was Nick Joaquin who went, dying in his sleep shortly before the elections. Who knows? Maybe he did not want to live long enough to see the results. It would not have been unlike him to register his protest that way. But he had not been himself since Ding died. Ding was his protégé and good friend, and the cruelty of fate must have taken its toll on his stout heart. Nick was a devoted Christian, however he wrote about the pagan wellsprings of Christianity in this country, but even believers have been known to disbelieve life's unbelievable twists. He withdrew from the world to share the company of shadows in his home.

Alas, as it turned out, permanently. Billy Lacaba had been telling me we had a date with him to repair to a piano bar for no other reason than to toast life. We never quite got a common time to do it, until too late. Much later, Billy, his brother Pete and I went to the place, and as the singer sang Cole Porter to the lilting strains of a piano, Billy sighed and said he had done his duty. We toasted to Nick. I thought again what a monumental loss he was.

Last month, it was Lito Tiongson, playwright and filmmaker. He was a committed activist who never forgot the motto, "Serve the people," and yoked his art to that end. His films and documentaries easily show so: "Hubad na Gubat" "No Time for Crying," "Mendiola Massacre," "Beyond the Walls of Prison," "Lean," "Fragments," "Batas Militar." Like Ding, he too was beset by cancer. He was diagnosed with lymphoma early this year, and though he struggled valiantly against it, as he always had against oppression, he eventually succumbed to it.

Lito and I worked in Eggie Apostol's projects on martial law on its 25th anniversary. Lito did the documentary part, I did the book part. A good deal of the material I used in the book, particularly the descriptions about the rallies and demonstrations, I got from the footage in the documentary. Lito proved by his life and work that "committed artist" is not a contradiction in terms. He proved that activism does not impede art (though it can do so when done mindlessly), it advances it. He is another great loss to the community, the artistic and national community apart from the activist one.

Then only a couple of weeks ago, George Canseco passed away as well, from cancer of the liver. Canseco, of course, is the more widely known—or at least his works are. He composed more than 300 songs in his lifetime, many of them now classics, some of them staples in weddings. "Ikaw," "Ngayon at Kailanman," and "Paano Ba Ang Mangarap" are but some of them. His songs have been sung by all the major pop singers in this country, bar none. He was a candidate for National Artist for Music before he died, and it would be a shame if they do not bestow it on him (as on Levi Celerio) however posthumously.

I met Canseco a couple of times in TV talk shows, and on both occasions he was advocating changing the name of the country from "Philippines" to "Maharlika." Seemingly a facetious thing, it reflected his intense pride as a Filipino and his belief that Filipino artistry was second to none. He certainly proved both well justified.

And now Zeneida Amador. Amador I only met a few times, and barely exchanged anything but nods with. But I did hear from her a few times in letters, on the occasions she expressed her appreciation for things I had written, and on the occasions she invited me to watch Repertory.

I remember something the late Rolando Tinio said some time before he too died many years ago at age 60. He and Amador started out seemingly at cross-purposes, Rolando doing Tagalog plays with the aim of raising mass awareness and appreciation of theater and Zeneida doing English-language plays with a literate audience in mind. Rolando translating Shakespeare and Puccini into Tagalog, Zeneida having actors speak with American and English accents. Armed with sharp tongues and caustic wits, they now and then let them fly in the direction of each other.

But in the end they became very good friends. The reason was easy, said Rolando. In the end, the directions they pursued did not greatly matter. They were not different, they were the same. They were linked by the strongest of bonds, which was a common devotion to art, a common passion for theater. They were perfectionists, who earned the eternal gratitude of their wards for the hell they put them through to get to heaven. Amador, like Tinio, will be sorely missed for generations to come.

Same question I asked a couple of years ago when we had artists also dying in droves: Why artists, God? Why not politicians?

'Mano po' time

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

FOR Cabinet appointees waiting for confirmation from the Commission on Appointments, it's "*mano po*" time with CA members. At the birthday celebration of Senate President Franklin Drilon held at Club Filipino last Tuesday evening (he turned 59), Environment Secretary Michael Defensor raised to his forehead the hand of Sen. Richard Gordon in a simulation of the traditional Filipino greeting.

Agrarian Reform Secretary Rene Villa laughingly asked Defensor, "Will I get confirmed if I made *mano* to the senator?"

"*Lalo kang hindi makokompirma* (The more you will not be confirmed)," said Defensor, adding that Gordon would feel insulted that someone older was making *mano* to him.

Meanwhile, Sen. Mar Roxas was being congratulated by everyone for topping the ratings for senators in the latest survey, with a whopping 74 percent. "*Tsamba,*" quipped Mar, while his mom Judy Roxas opined humbly that it's a "residue" of the last elections. Mar definitely will remain somebody to reckon with in our politics.

* * *

That evening, there was a lot of speculation as to who would breeze through the CA and who wouldn't. Based on my interviews and borrowing the words of Sen. Rodolfo Biazon, "it wouldn't be a walk in the park" for Interior Secretary Angelo Reyes and Energy Secretary Vincent Perez. On the other hand, Education Secretary Florencio Abad, president of the Liberal Party, is expected to breeze through the CA. Biazon, who chairs the interior and local government subcommittee of the CA, admits to having a difficult time keeping an image of impartiality toward Reyes considering that the nominee, like Biazon, belongs to that exclusive club of former AFP chiefs of staff and is a fellow PMAyer. Moreover, Biazon is with the administration coalition.

To ensure that he's perceived to be even-handed, Biazon is allowing both defenders and critics of Reyes all the leeway they need. But a number of senators have indicated their intention to invoke Section 20 of the CA rules against Reyes. If they do so, there's nothing one can do, says Biazon. It's easy to see though that all the vicious attacks against Reyes are politically motivated. Some people can't forgive him for his role in Edsa II.

* * *

After the horseplay, Gordon told Defensor he's going to question why the DENR has failed again and again to forecast the geographical path of heavy rains and warn people in the areas to be affected to exercise caution and, perhaps, transfer to higher grounds. Gordon, who chairs the Philippine National Red Cross, said he would seek an investigation in view of the many lives lost because of tropical depression Winnie.

To my mind, Gordon is barking up the wrong tree. The proper agency is Pagasa. But as news reports have noted, it is woefully lacking in rain gauge radars since its P2.7-billion modernization program has been shelved. Pagasa needs several radars, each of which is said to cost between P35 and P40 million.

* * *

I can't help thinking: if the House and Senate members had only chipped in from their pork barrel to fund these radars, Pagasa would have been better equipped. Then perhaps a smaller number of their constituents would have lost their lives in deadly floods. Then too, was it not Defensor who said that we have all the laws against illegal logging, which is again being blamed for the deadly floods? How can we fight illegal logging when in many places, local government and police officials are in cahoots with the loggers, and some officials are themselves doing the logging?

* * *

At Drilon's party, I asked senators and congressmen how many revenue measures would be passed before Congress adjourns on Dec. 17. The consensus seems to be that at least two will be approved: the increase in "sin taxes" and the telecom franchise bill. A possible third bill, if questions being raised against it could be answered, is the lateral attrition bill which has been renamed the "accountability reform bill."

* * *

Certain facts have emerged. One is that the opposition seems to have come to finally realize that it's absolutely necessary to come up with some tax measures to avoid a downgrading of our international credit rating. Passing the bill on sin taxes, which is expected to immediately raise about P10 billion, is very significant as it demonstrates the political will of Congress to impose taxes on some very powerful economic interests that can dictate who gets elected to Congress. I only wish, though, that the lawmakers had acted on this issue with more dispatch instead of going through a bloody debate and even threatening to derail it. All these added to the sense of political uncertainty and drift that credit agencies are wary of.

* * *

Then, too, the administration was earlier pushing for the bill to rationalize fiscal incentives as one of the tax measures. This pertains to curbing abuses by future investors in the use of sweeteners such as tax holidays, tariffs and other incentives. But Drilon was able to convince the Palace that revenues from this measure remain in the realm of speculation as they depend largely on whether indeed investors would come in. He pointed out though that taxing the windfall profits of telecommunications companies will bring in as much as P10 billion.

Studies have shown that Smart and Globe are now among the most profitable companies, with each reporting net profits of over P10 billion. Their profits are expected to grow by leaps and bounds, since Filipinos are now spending more for mobile phones than for food (which is bad). Congress now wants a "bite on profits," as Sen. Ralph Recto, chair of the Senate ways and means committee, put it. This explains why all of a sudden, the telecom franchise bill appeared on the horizon.

20 years since Bhopal

HUMAN FACE

Ma. Ceres P. Doyo

IN THIS season of disasters, both natural and man-made, it behooves us to remember the Bhopal tragedy in India which killed more than 20,000 and whose aftereffects continue to destroy the health of thousands. It was one of the worst ecological disasters in history, rivaling Chernobyl in Russia, and it could have been prevented.

Many of the youth of today and the future may not know about Bhopal because the tragedy is not likely going to make it to the textbooks. Does it not qualify as a historical entry like the 79 A.D. Mt. Vesuvius eruption that buried Pompeii? Will our own 1991 Ormoc mudslide that killed thousands in a blink of an eye make it to our error-ridden textbooks (which are a huge disaster in themselves)? And didn't we see a likeness of Ormoc in the past few days? And not to forget the Marcopper disaster in Marinduque.

On the night of Dec. 2 and early morning of Dec. 3, 1984, a Union Carbide plant in Bhopal began leaking some 27 tons of the methyl isocynate (MIC), a deadly gas. According to The Bhopal Medical Appeal and Sambhavna Trust that espouse the cause of victims, none of the six safety systems designed to contain that kind of a leak was operational and soon the gas spread throughout the city.

An estimated half a million people were exposed to the gas and 20,000 have so far died as a result of this. More than 120,000 continue to suffer ailments such as blindness, breathing problems, and reproductive disorders.

The site has never been truly cleaned up and Bhopal residents continue to be poisoned, say environmental groups, Greenpeace among them.

Greenpeace-Philippines is bringing up Bhopal to remind us all that there might be a deadly keg somewhere waiting to explode. Remember Chemphil a few months ago?

In 1999, Greenpeace reported that chemicals causing cancer, brain damage and brain defects were found in the water at the Bhopal accident site. These were in extremely high levels, that is, several million times higher. Trichloroethene, known to impair fetal development, was found at levels 50 times more than the accepted safe limits.

A 2002 testing report revealed that poisons such as 1, 3, 5 trichlorobenzene, dichloromethane, chloroform, lead and mercury were present in the breast milk of nursing women.

Michigan-based Dow Chemical purchased Union Carbide and acquired its assets in 2001. Dow Chemical is said to have steadfastly refused to clean up the site, provide safe drinking water, compensate the victims or disclose the composition of the gas leak which doctors need to know in order to treat the victims. It's supposed to be a "trade secret."

Union Carbide sticks to the figure of 3,800 victims. But according to reports, "municipal workers who picked up bodies with their own hands, loading them onto trucks for burial in mass graves or to be burned on mass pyres, reckon they shifted at least 15,000 bodies. Survivors, basing their estimates on the number of shrouds sold in the city, conservatively claim about 8,000 died in the first week. Such body counts become meaningless when you know that the dying has never stopped."

The Bhopal Union Carbide pesticide factory seemed problematic since the time it was built in the 1970s. India seemed, at first, a huge market for pest control products. It did not turn out that way. The poor farmers, who constantly battled with droughts and floods, could not afford the pesticides. The plant never reached its full capacity and ceased active production in the early 1980s.

As reports go, a great quantity of chemicals remained there even while the plant's safety system was allowed to deteriorate. It seemed logical for management to think that since the plant had ceased production, there was no threat. They were wrong.

Here was how it started: "Regular maintenance had fallen into such disrepair that on the night of Dec. 2, when an employee was flushing a corroded pipe, multiple stopcocks failed and allowed water to flow freely into the largest tank of MIC. Exposure to this water soon led to an uncontrolled reaction; the tank was blown out of its concrete sarcophagus and spewed a deadly cloud of MIC, hydrogen cyanide, mono methyl amine and other chemicals that hugged the ground. Blown by the prevailing winds, this cloud settle over much of Bhopal. Soon, thereafter, people began to die."

In 1989, five years after the disaster, Union Carbide, in a partial settlement with the Indian government, paid some $470 million in compensation. The victims were not part of the negotiations and many felt cheated by the $300 to $500 each received. It could not cover many years of medical treatment. Those who were awarded aren't necessarily better off now than those who were not.

About 50,000 Bhopalis who were injured could no longer return to work or move freely about. Those with relatives to care for them are lucky. Many have no one to look after them because their next of kin had all died.

The Bhopal local government has charged Union Carbide's CEO Warren Anderson with manslaughter and if convicted, he could serve 10 years in prison. Warren evaded international arrest and a summons to appear before a US court.

In August 2002, Greenpeace found Warren living a life of luxury in the Hamptons. Says a report: "Neither the American nor the Indian government seems interested in disturbing him with an extradition, despite the recent scandals over corporate crime...The Union Carbide Corporation itself was charged with culpable homicide, a criminal charge whose penalty has no upper limit. These charges have never been resolved, as Union Carbide, like its former CEO, has refused to appear before an Indian court."

* * *

Send comments to cerespd@info.com.ph

Bravo, Bibot

THE LONG VIEW

Manuel L. Quezon III

LIKE all members of our family, she was quick to anger that just as quickly waned. Once I carped in print about what I felt was Repertory's failure to contribute to the Centennial celebrations. This drew a "volcanic" phone call from her. My father called me to his room, and with a naughty smile, handed me the receiver. I immediately got a 12-gauge blast of curses from Bibot. The more I gurgled "I see," and "Of course, I'll correct what I wrote," the naughtier became my father's smile. It turned out Repertory was doing its thing, and Bibot herself was directing the reenactment of Rizal's execution. It was my first encounter with an angry reader, and just as well. Since then, other angry readers have always paled in comparison to Bibot—but at least she never threw a chair at me, as she once did to a friend of mine in Repertory. My father's mischievous delight, it turned out, came from family pride in the genetically programmed temper of his clan.

With her passing, it is inevitable that stories of her temper abound. It is wrong, however, to think of her as yet another martinet in a profession famous for the petty tyrannies of its practitioners. People undoubtedly feared her, but Bibot's legendary professionalism was as much about nurturing talent as it was about terrorizing the lazy, the weak-willed, and the timid. For a generation, hers was the only show in town, performing before audiences that had seen the best that the world's stages could offer, and keeping them coming back, performance after performance. In the cramped cultural confines of martial law, her Repertory was both an emotional escape hatch and a means of liberation for the imagination.

The pre-Edsa Repertory was the incubator in which talents were hatched, and in which a seemingly endless progression of fledgling talents cut their teeth on the stage. Certainly, the incompetent and the irredeemably flighty were weeded out due to the exacting standards demanded by Bibot. But the list of talents developed by the troika of Amador, Barredo, Virata is long; and these are talents who have become famous in their own right: Guingona, Wilson, Salonga, to name just a few. A game of six degrees of thespian separation leads always to Zeneida "Bibot" Amador.

Quick to anger, and just as quick to laugh: the other side of her was her humor, her wit—and her compassion. What separates a director of note from a tyrant of the stage is the positive direction that all genuinely creative expression eventually attains. A selfish, despotic director will destroy talents and their lives for fleeting successes in specific productions; a director, to be truly great, nurtures talents, who in turn demonstrate sustained excellence in every production they become involved in.

Acting is a profession both gregarious and lonely. The actor, director, the playwright, the stagehand all bring the imagination to life and connect it with the audience. For each one involved in the professional side of producing a play, however, there are elements of lonely, painful isolation, of doubt, exhaustion, and fear. Memory must be conditioned to remember lines; movements must be perfected, emotions must both be reined in and let loose. There must be cooperation, and there must be the individual display of virtuosity, of talent. Above all, there must be discipline and pride, which we all know can often be mutually exclusive. Somehow, Bibot mastered all the things required of the stage, season after season, production after production.

When I took a stab at playing impresario—coming up with a production that required dramatic performances not on stage but in the recording studio—there came a point when I needed someone with the right gravitas and the necessary prestige to introduce each of the performances in "Twenty Speeches That Moved a Nation." Bibot's name came instantly to mind, and she just as instantly agreed to help. The Bibot that came to the recording studio to briskly record her introductory spiels was the laughing, supportive Bibot who is remembered just as much as the stormy Bibot of rehearsals. Some years later, I pestered her about an idea of enlisting Repertory to teach elocution classes, using "20 Speeches" as an aid; she was just as supportive then, though the idea died a natural death. She was always an innovator.

Creative genius, Rizal said, knows no country. Or, as the Bard put it, all the world's a stage. Zeneida Amador was a creative genius, and she most certainly loved her country deeply. She loved it so much she wanted it enriched by the prose, the lyrics, performed in the great stages of the world. And it is because of her, that the whole world, today, is a stage for Filipino actors—just as Repertory's stage brought the world to us, the audience. The history of Philippine theater will always accord to Bibot a standing ovation: audiences and actors united in acclaiming genius, integrity and dedication. In a life dedicated to communication, I will never forget one moment when, by a single look and with an uncharacteristic whisper, "It's all right, cousin," she helped wipe away the grief that engulfed me when my father—who delighted in her temper—died. He would have glowed over her kindness then.

* * *

Comments welcome at www.quezon.ph

Out there

YOUNG BLOOD

Jae de la Cruz

We want to know what the young are thinking about. What are their thoughts on current issues? We welcome contributions from the twentysomething and below.—Ed.

A FEW nights before the Law Aptitude Exam was to be conducted four years ago, a friend and I were drinking beer at Sarah's, our favorite drinking place. I had filled out the application but was entertaining thoughts of not taking the entrance test to the UP College of Law. I was still uncertain about what I wanted to do after college.

"Scared?" he sneered. "_____ is taking it, too." Four years of friendship had made him quite adept at bringing out my competitive, egotistic, megalomaniacal streak to get the necessary results, which was what mention of that name was intended to do. I took the exam.

Pass the exam I did. A week before the interview, I broke up with my American boyfriend because, among other reasons, he offended my UP-honed *tibak* sensibilities. ("You're too good for the PI" was his idea of a compliment.) Feeling a bit out of whack, with my long-term plans suddenly altered, I took the interview.

Before enrollment, I still had my doubts. Then a day before enrollment, I saw Chief Justice Hilario Davide at a Japanese restaurant. We were eating the same kind of sushi at the exact same moment. How the mere sight of the Chief Justice enjoying raw fish could have been taken as a cosmic sign, none of my friends could ever understand, but it was because of that that I decided to enroll.

On these inauspicious, less-than-promising beginnings began my four-year journey through law school.

I had two major apprehensions. First was that I wasn't sure that I was cut out for law school. My suspicions seemed to be confirmed when classes started. Everyone seemed to be so driven, so studious, so straight—and so smug. Everyone seemed to be giving off this my-life-is-in-order vibe and it appeared as though there were very specific yardsticks with which you would be judged. The homogeneity drove me crazy. I was missing the UP I know and love, and the motley brew of activism, poetry, poverty and fiery debate that make it what it is for generations of students. I missed my flawed, beautiful friends who win both poetry contests and *lambanog* challenges and who always run out of money but never of things to talk for hours about. I resented the hypocrisy of law school where apparently dating a musician is more scandalous than getting a high grade in a subject because the professor is your brod.

Secondly, I was not sure I wanted to be a lawyer. I didn't like lawyers; and for the most part, I still don't. I particularly don't like the old lawyers in their ill-fitting *barong* doing the *pañero*/old boys' club routine in court. Immediately you realize that all the stories you have heard are true.

I remember a hearing I had last year for my child's rights class which fell on my birthday. On that day I got my very first extortion experience, from a fiscal no less. In a case I was handling at the National Labor Relations Commission, I heard the labor arbiter berating my client rudely and treating her disrespectfully in front of many people. I wasn't sure that this was a world I wanted to be a part of.

The things that I've just said are things that my close friends already know, shared between bottles of beer. And always they advise: "Why don't you just leave? Quit law school. Do what you want." Inevitably, I'd reply, "*Sayang eh,*" too lazy to explore deep within myself and find out why impulsive, impetuous me has decided to stay the course. What is it in law school that keeps me coming back year after year to enroll?

A teacher in second year told us: "Law school is not here. Law school is out there where oppressions are taking place, where people are hurting, where power is being brandished with impunity. Your education is being paid for by a farmer who cannot even send his own kids to school. You owe it to him to make this world better for his kids."

I understood what that meant in theory and appreciated it enough to remember it to this day. But it only became real in the years that followed.

It first became real with Danny Boy, a 17-year-old imprisoned for a crime he didn't commit. Three years in prison couldn't make his eyes stop dancing. It was during the times I spent with him that I knew I was never going to be a corporate lawyer.

Then we started doing our internship at the UP Law Office of Legal Aid (OLA), a mandatory internship program for seniors where they are assigned real cases and real clients. Gritty and heartbreaking their stories are, these indigent clients come to us for free legal services. My OLA experience I can only describe as life-defining. What one used to see only as social ills like domestic violence and the imbalance in labor relations suddenly have names and faces and worries and children and gifts of eggs and fruits shyly given in gratitude.

One case I was given involves lead poisoning of an entire community by a battery recycling plant. Recently one of the persons from the community, the only lead poisoning victim who was accessible to us and vocal about his condition, died. A few days earlier, I was talking to a friend and telling him how inadequate the case was making me feel. Crazy, impulsive 24-year-old law students who decided to go to law school on a whim have no business making the legal case for a community against a multinational company in a country where there is no existing jurisprudence on public-interest environmental lawsuits. It's hard and frustrating work and any illusions about me becoming an Erin Brockovich have all but dissipated. This notwithstanding the fact that there's nothing I'd rather do with my life.

And it all boils down to that: what I want to do with my life. A lot has been said about the brain drain, about young people leaving the country for greener pastures, and about the "heroic sacrifices" of those who chose to stay. In my case, it's not about sacrifice or heroism, or the high drama that comes with that. My friends will tell you that I'm not the biggest believer in self-denial. I've truly found that I was at my happiest chatting to Danny Boy at the Malabon Jail, talking to fishermen in Pangasinan, lecturing about domestic violence in Bicutan, conducting a paralegal seminar in Marilao, Bulacan. I've found that beer tastes better in the beaches of Bolinao, that the best-tasting eggs are those given by grateful clients and that I'll never be happy as a Makati corporate chick drinking Starbucks coffee and speaking Starbucks English.

I went to law school lost and confused, and I sometimes found myself straggling uncertainly. I'm leaving it (hopefully, by April of next year) knowing what I want, where I am going, and perhaps most importantly, who I am. And as I look forward in hope and anticipation, so too do I look back in gratitude.

Jae de la Cruz, 24, is a senior at the University of the Philippines College of Law.

Strike out martial law features in strike laws

TBAK, a network of martial law activists, strongly condemns the use of naked military force against the strikers of Hacienda Luisita and the consequent death of at least seven of them and injury to many others.

We find no justification whatsoever for the use of guns against the strikers. Agitational provocations or even rock-throwing cannot justify—morally or legally—the shooting down of protesters in any mass action.

From the beginning, there was inappropriate and disproportionate deployment of a battle-ready military force, backed up by an APC, to watch over such a civil activity as a strike.

We hold the government agency that authorized the deployment of an armed military contingent against the strike fully responsible for the death and injury of strikers. We also hold equally responsible the military and police commands that allowed or failed to prevent the shooting of the strikers.

Tbak calls on legislators and NGO advocates to amend the strike and picketing laws, which retain their martial law features that make strikes inutile and only provide the occasion for violent confrontations in the picket lines.

Tbak also calls on the principals of the Cojuangco estate to deal directly with the strikers and respond to the legitimate demands of the workers who have long served Hacienda Luisita.

—ABRAHAM BALADAD JR.,
chair, Tbak Inc., Alumni Center,
University of the Philippines,
Diliman, Quezon City

Monsod should ask tobacco farmers

SUPERIOR to what? This is a question I would like ask Solita Monsod in reaction to her column titled "A superior sin tax bill." (PDI, 11/20/04)

In that column, Monsod made a pitch for the alleged virtues of a tax bill filed by Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile. She urged civil society to support the measure, saying it will generate more revenues, deter smoking (because it will put all cigarette brands in a single category) and adjust the tax rates automatically based on inflation.

I have relatives in Ilocos. They are all into tobacco farming. I bet none of them are amused by Monsod's claim.

For one, she doesn't say that while Enrile's bill spares the premium, imported (and smuggled) brands from any new taxes in the next three years, it places the tax burden on the shoulders of poor smokers and tobacco farmers who will pay four times the tax for low-priced brands. According to published reports, low-priced cigarettes, which are currently taxed at P1.12 per pack, are slapped P6 per pack or a whopping 436-percent increase under the Enrile bill. Is this just and fair for the small farmers?

Second, Monsod rejects the existing four-tier classification of cigarettes. Maybe, she needs a lesson or two about the tobacco plant's physical configuration. Even elementary pupils in Candon, Ilocos Sur know that a tobacco plant yields a variety of leaves: premium or Grade A, high, medium, and low-grade leaves or the so-called "rejects." As such, the four-tier classification of cigarettes simply follows the plant's anatomy.

Since Monsod loves the Enrile bill so much, why doesn't she go to Ilocos and explain to the farmers that there will be no more market for their "rejects" next year or the year after? Why sell the Enrile bill to civil society which couldn't care less for the sunburnt farmers of Narvacan? Since it's their life and that of their children on the line, I think these farmers have better ideas on this tax measure rather than neighbors like Monsod and Enrile who live in their plush and gated enclaves in Dasmariñas Village.

—HENRY CUIÑO,
989 Aurora Blvd., Cubao, QC

Justice for all Hacienda Luisita protesters, workers

THE TASK Force Detainees of the Philippines condemns in the strongest possible terms the violent dispersal of farmers in the Hacienda Luisita strike, which resulted in the death of at least seven protesters.

In his speech at the House of Representatives, Rep. Benigno Aquino III defended the dispersal. The reason given by the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the Philippine National Police can never justify the dispersal, much less one that was done in a violent manner. If it were true that they were "subjected to sniper fire coming from an adjacent barangay," shouldn't they have searched for the perpetrator first? Why did they have to immediately resort to violence?

An independent investigation should be done to find out who fired the fatal shots. We hope that access to justice would be given equally to the rich and the poor. The perpetrators of the violent dispersal should be brought to justice. The 116 detained protesters, 16 of whom are, women, should be released.

Lastly, we ask the management to address the legitimate grievances of the workers of Hacienda Luisita. Justice should also be given them. And the government should ensure that their rights are upheld.

—AURORA A. PARONG, MD,
executive director,
Task Force Detainees of the Philippines,
45 St. Mary St., Cubao, Quezon City

A political detainee in Myanmar

AS a group connected to Amnesty International, we respectfully wish to call the attention of all INQUIRER readers to the plight of Khin Maung Kyi, whose detention in Myanmar appears to be caused solely by his peaceful political activity.

We have written directly to the government of Myanmar but we think Khin Maung Kyi's plight should be known in countries that constitute the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

We have also written your embassy in London a month ago regarding this matter.

—BRIAN A. DAVIDSON,
Redcliff Study Centre, 60 Third Avenue,
Teignmouth, Devon, TQ14 9DP

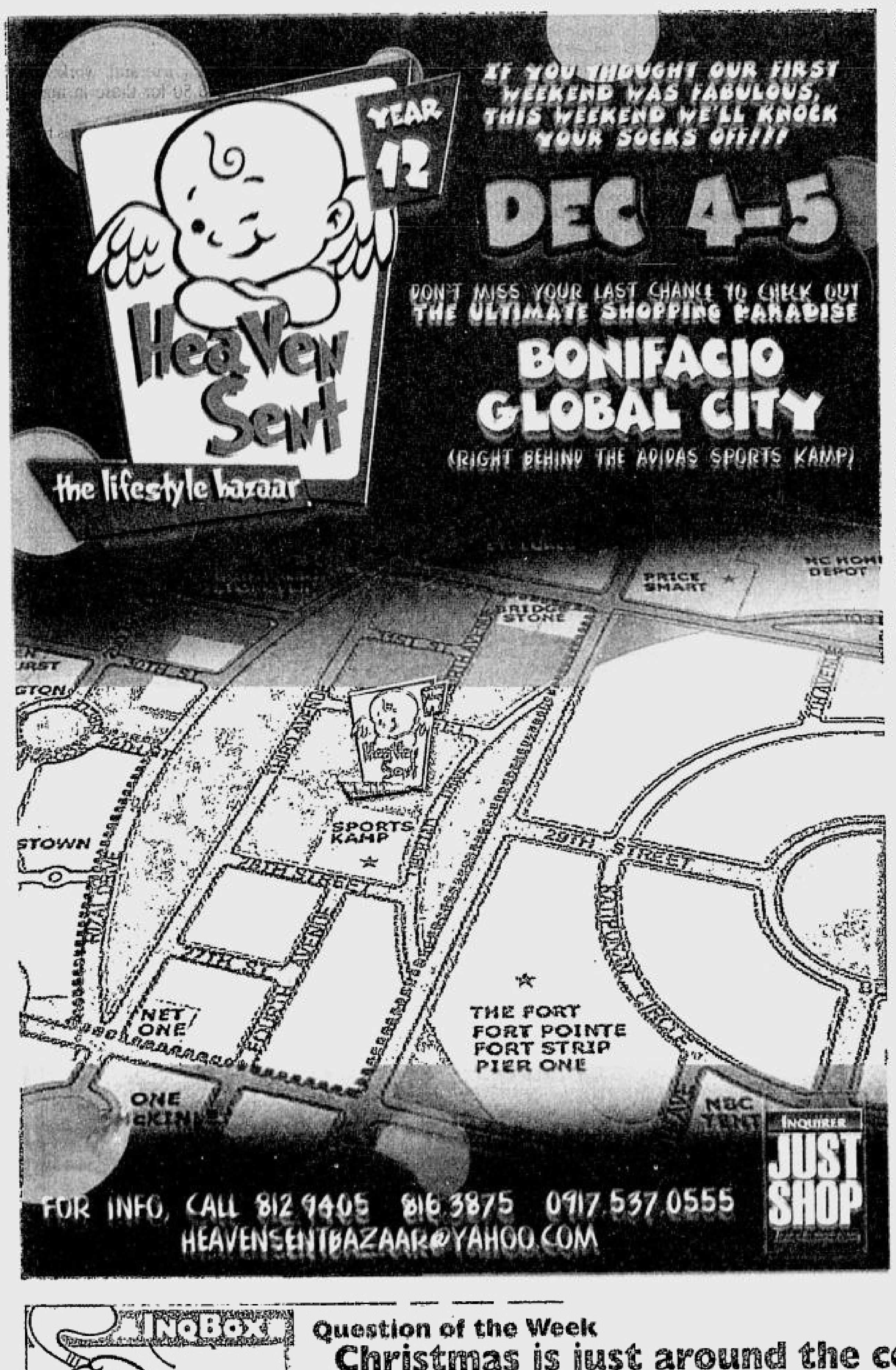
Learning from each other

WHENEVER one reads an article by Conrado de Quiros on the Philippine political situation and President Macapagal-Arroyo, he invariably attacks GMA on a personal level. And since most of his educated admirers believe him hook, line and sinker, Filipinos tend to denigrate an already physically diminutive President. But why is that?

Bar none, De Quiros is perhaps the best columnist in the country today. Perhaps, his lack of attachment to the center of power allows him to let the ax fall where it should. But then again, if that is so, why does he not credit GMA for her achievements? Perhaps, he believes that GMA is an accidental President. Unlike the verbal assaults on John Kerry, she was the right person at the right place and at the right time in our history. And for that, De Quiros can never forgive her no matter what noble things she does. Coupled with the fact that her husband has not exactly risen to the level of Caesar's wife and we hear innuendoes of corruption and influence-peddling—which may or may not be true. But when hinted by De Quiros, the rumors are given legitimacy.

To borrow the words of Rudyard Kipling, GMA and De Quiros are poles apart and never the twain shall meet. But this does not mean that their cold war should not reap lessons for both. Out of humility, GMA should listen to De Quiros' broadsides. After all, what does not kill her will only make her stronger. And De Quiros ought to be less jaundiced and admit the fact, that like it or not, she is entitled to a candid criticism of her governance, not her personality.

—EDWIN LACIERDA,
lacierda@pldtdsl.net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INQUIRER JUST SHOP

GSIS must be kept viable

THIS refers to the letter of Dr. Estrella D. Solidum of the University of the Philippines titled "Time for GSIS to focus serving its members," (PDI, 10/26/04) particularly on the non-granting of pension increases and Christmas cash gifts to survivors of Government Service Insurance System pensioners.

As a social security institution, the GSIS is bound to provide protection and benefits to its members and their families. It should be emphasized, though, that in giving benefits, the GSIS always considers the financial capability of its Social Insurance Fund, from which the members' benefits are sourced. As a guiding principle, benefits are granted without prejudice to the viability of GSIS funds—to ensure that all current and future beneficiaries get their benefits at the proper time.

It is for this reason that the structure of GSIS benefits is regularly reviewed, with the end-view of rationalizing them and implementing reforms, if needed. Withholding pension increases and Christmas cash gifts for "survivorship pensioners" was part of the GSIS reforms recently undertaken. This reform comes with the adoption of the Enhanced Life Policy (ELP), which aims to provide the survivors of the insured with higher death benefits. The ELP is deemed more responsive to the actual needs of families who must bear the financial burden brought about by the death of a GSIS member.

The Christmas cash gift is merely intended to augment the income of the GSIS pensioners. It is given for humanitarian reasons—as a privilege, not as a legal obligation.

As to the computer system, this was instrumental in building the database that allowed the GSIS to build a more efficient record-keeping system.

The computerized database, started in 2002, helped improve what used to be a backward and chaotic state of affairs that left the GSIS "leaking" in financial resources amounting to an average of P7 billion per year. In fact, with more than 80 percent in place, the database discovered that the GSIS has only 1.5 million members, instead of 2.7 million that was previously recorded. In other words, its computerization program enabled the GSIS to "sanitize" its list of members, thereby safeguarding and lengthening the life of the pension fund precisely for the benefit of GSIS members now and in the future.

GSIS members are also expected to substantially benefit from another ongoing major program—the GSIS e-Card. The program is yet another proof that the GSIS is sparing no effort to provide faster and more efficient service to all its members.

—ELLA E. VALENCERINA,
vice president for public affairs,
Government Service Insurance System,
Financial Center, Pasay City

Cunanan's concern for UP

IT was irksome reading Belinda Olivares-Cunanan's opinion on the deadlock in the election for a new president of the University of the Philippines. (PDI, 11/22/04) Her argument that past UP presidents would never have gotten their position had there been no intervention from past Philippine presidents was mere grasping at straws—a classic case of trying to win an argument not by merit but by mudslinging.

Why would Edgardo Espiritu have been an ideal UP president for our times? Because he was a banker who made waves in the private sector but did nothing of consequence as a member of President Joseph Estrada's Cabinet? What did he do as finance secretary when UP started to experience massive budget cuts?

On the other hand, Emerlinda Roman has proven to be one of the leading business educators in the country. Through her pioneering researches—published and unpublished—she has shown a firm grasp of current management issues, negating the argument that Espiritu is the better choice because of his new way of thinking. I would bet that Roman is even more conversant about new management theories and paradigms than Espiritu.

Cunanan's "concern" for UP's decrepit buildings and underpaid faculty may sound touching. But instead of sharing her opinion on the UP presidency, she should have asked her good friend, President Macapagal-Arroyo, to realign our national budget and priorities in favor of education. Then she would have done UP a big service.

—ERWIN RAFAEL,
1578-C 8th St., Fabie Estate,
Paco, Manila 1007

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Gov't lottery run by 'jueteng' agents

By Tonette Orejas
PDI Central Luzon Desk

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—Bet collectors for the illegal numbers game *jueteng* are doubling up as solicitors of bets for the government-run lottery.

The uncanny job mix began in July when a suspected *jueteng* lord here reportedly reclaimed his control of *jueteng* operations in parts of Central and Northern Luzon.

The standard items in the bags or pockets of collectors are stacks of lotto cards from the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office and the usual *jueteng* paraphernalia—*papelitos* (strips of paper) and *cotejo* (list of previous winning number pairs).

A *cobrador* (collector) here said he also collects bets for lotto as an extra income. Regular street agents like him get a 2-percent commission for every playing card.

A lotto playing card costs a minimum of P10. Its price varies, depending on agents and outlets selling these.

The *jueteng* bet collector said he has to earn more because commission from *jueteng* had gone down to 10 percent for every P1 (10 centavos) bet.

The commission used to be 15 percent when another suspected *jueteng* lord ran the game here.

The collector said lotto bettors prefer having him around because they need not to go to an outlet to place their bets.

Jueteng workers conduct the business on foot or on bikes, going from house to house.

Authorities suspect the lotto collection was a cover for *jueteng*.

A lotto franchisee in Barangay Dolores here said she has not tapped *jueteng* collectors as agents.

A woman *cobrador* said she and her group have shifted to lotto because they have been displaced when the suspected *jueteng* lord allegedly recruited collectors from Batangas.

"When policemen arrest us so they could show that they're doing something against *jueteng*, I feel like I am a criminal. I don't like that. I just want to earn for my 10 children," the woman said.

In this city, however, *jueteng* bets are openly taken and collection stations are operated without discretion. Three stations are at the back of the Metropolitan Cathedral.

In a pastoral letter on Dec. 1, Pampanga Archbishop Paciano Aniceto called on Kapampangans, especially the poor, to stop betting on *jueteng*.

VINCENT CABREZA/PDI NORTHERN LUZON BUREAU

SOLDIERS give military honors to Ibaloi hero Mateo Carantes in posthumous rites during the transfer of Carantes' remains to give way to an investor's plan to expand business.

Ibaloi hero's remains moved to give way to trade expansion

By Vincent Cabreza
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

BAGUIO CITY—The remains of 13 Ibaloi ancestors were dug up from the Baguio City Economic Zone property and entombed in wooden caskets at a government-owned grave site on Sunday after their children lost a decades-old fight to maintain their sacred burial grounds here.

The heirs of Mateo "Kustacio" Carantes were divided by government pressure to have the graves relocated to allow a manufacturing firm more room to expand inside the BCEZ.

Moog Controls Inc., a manufacturer of aeronautic parts, wanted to expand over the grave site and had gone to Trade Secretary Cesar Purisima to claim it, according to Tereso Panga, BCEZ administrator.

Most of Carantes' heirs performed the chore in silence because the dispute had made the transfer of the remains even more complicated.

Ibaloi rituals rely on the deceased soul's consent before his or her family can dig up the remains, said Estony Carantes, Kustacio's 73-year-old grandson, who performs the role of *mambunong* (ritual priest) for the clan.

Buried under a wooden house that the Philippine Economic Zone Authority demolished this year, are Kustacio, his wife Ugasya "Bae," his brother Jatjaten, his children Afeng, Bilad and Elena, his sister-in-law Saminia, Bilad's husband Docio Macay and his mother Cofet. Bilad's children—Rosa Macay and grandchildren Kotepet, Raymond and Ebbey Macay—are also buried in the area.

Their bones were exhumed using a ritual called *madmad*. The remains were cleaned and wrapped in traditional Ibaloi death blankets and transported in cardboard boxes to a small Peza-owned lot near the Loakan Airport.

But the relocation was historic nonetheless.

For the first time, Army soldiers stood vigil over Kustacio, an Ibaloi revolutionary hero who helped Katipuneros against the Spanish government, and who helped hide Gen. Emilio Aguinaldo as he eluded American troops on his escape to Palanan, Isabela.

Himself a Katipunero, Kustacio was a township president of Tuba, Benguet, and Baguio in the 1900s. He was tortured by Americans when his association with Aguinaldo was exposed, said Joseph Jude Carantes, one of Kustacio's great-grandsons.

Kustacio died in 1913 due to an undiagnosed internal condition.

Before the hero's bones were buried with Ugasya in a large tomb, the soldiers sent by Army Col. Elpidio Aspuria draped his coffin with the Philippine flag and gave Kustacio a gun salute.

Val Carantes, a Tuba councilor, said the military tribute ended the ceremony on an upbeat note.

Early that day, Estony's chants and prayers had to guide the deceased through the Carantes clan's emotional turmoil and the government's apparent insensitivity to indigenous peoples, to explain the circumstances of their transfer.

Andrew and Beauregard Carantes, Jude's cousins, had sued Peza before the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) to stop the relocation.

Andrew, a professor of the Philippine Military Academy, said Beauregard, the Carantes clan president, refused to accept a deal with Peza that, the clan noted, "was more harassment of the Ibalois instead of a genuine effort to understand Ibaloi culture."

"Although Kustacio's transfer renders our case moot and academic, we will press our opposition. We also want the government to realize that (indigenous peoples) have rights in this country. I am outraged that (government agencies tasked with asserting IP rights) never even lifted a finger to protect Kustacio's gravesite," Andrew said.

Before unearthing the graves, Estony apologized to the dead for the insult, and offered them gin and poured this over each of their tombs.

He also took soil from sections of the land where other Ibaloi dead are believed buried.

"They take the soil when no one in the family can remember the names of the dead. It is important for us to know who we are disturbing. Our rites are tied to their identities, their names," Jude said.

SENATOR'S PROPOSAL

Magna carta for small-scale miners sought

BAGUIO CITY—Sen. Aquilino Pimentel Jr. appealed to the Mines and Geosciences Bureau of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources to draft a magna carta for small-scale miners to protect their livelihood.

Pimentel, during the recent small-scale mining congress here, said the law on small-scale mining (Republic Act 7076) is being abused as large corporations claim small mining sites, put in capital and exploit small-scale miners.

"There are laws for everyone, both for small-scale and large-scale mining. In a democracy, no one set-up can have its way all the time. The resources of the mountains must belong to all, big and small. Small-scale miners with their *piko* and *pala* (picks and shovels) must also progress," Pimentel said.

Neoman de la Cruz, MGB Cordillera director, said Pimentel issued the call for a charter for small-scale miners because RA 7076 is no longer responsive to the miners' needs.

Pimentel said on Mt. Diwalwal in Mindanao, only about 20 people made their fortunes through the sweat of small-scale miners.

Horacio Ramos, MGB director, said small-scale mining produces P20 billion worth of gold annually, with Benguet responsible for about P1.7 billion of this production based on Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas purchases.

Ramos said in six to 10 years, 23 mining sites will operate in the country. Their operations are expected to bring in US$6 billion worth of investments and US$4.5 billion worth of foreign exchange earnings a year.

He said five corporate mining ventures are also expected to operate in the country in the next two years.

While mining must not be ignored as it is the country's biggest source of revenue, the environmental concerns of indigenous peoples in host communities must not be disregarded, Pimentel said.

"I don't argue with the environmental concerns of indigenous peoples, but we must find a way to harmonize (all issues surrounding mining)," he said.

Environment Secretary Michael Defensor said mining is one industry that can save the country from fiscal crisis. *Donna Demetillo, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

4M Central Luzon workers to receive ₱15 Cola

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—Starting this month, about four million workers in private companies in Central Luzon will get their daily P15 cost-of-living allowance (Cola).

The regional tripartite wages and productivity board issued on Wednesday the guidelines for the grant of the Cola for workers in seven provinces and 12 cities in the region.

The Cola applies to employees receiving the minimum wage of between P178.50 and P228.50 "regardless of position, designation or status of employment and method by which their wages are paid."

The Cola, according to the board, will be integrated into the basic pay of workers, retroactive to Aug. 19 this year.

This will bring the minimum wage to P193.50 for cottage and handicraft workers in the provinces (except Aurora at P170); P214.50-P228.50 for those in the retail service; P215.50-P230.50 for private hospital employees; P193.50-P209.50 for agricultural workers; and P232-243.50 for those in non-agricultural enterprises.

The board allowed applications for exemptions for retail and service companies with not more than 10 workers. *Tonette Orejas, PDI Central Luzon Desk*

Republic of the Philippines
SANGGUNIANG PANLALAWIGAN NG BATANGAS
Office of the Provincial Secretary
Sangguniang Panlalawigan Bldg., Laurel Park, Capitol Site, Batangas City

PUBLIC NOTICE AND INVITATION

You are cordially invited to attend and participate in the **PUBLIC HEARING** called for by the Sangguniang Panlalawigan ng Batangas to discuss issues and related matters concerning the **2004 SHEDULE OF MARKET VALUES FOR GENERAL REVISION OF REAL PROPERTY ASSESMENT IN THE PROVINCE OF BATANGAS**. This is for taxation purposes and will serve as the bases by which the corresponding Tax Ordinance of the Province will be drawn.

The particulars of said hearing are as follows:

SCHEDULE OF PUBLIC HEARINGS

2004 SCHEDULE OF MARKET VALUES FOR GENERAL REVISION OF REAL PROPERTY ASSESMENT IN THE PROVINCE OF BATANGAS

DATE/DAY		CLUSTER	HOST MUNICIPALITY VENUE
Dec. 3	Friday	Alitagtag, Cuenca, San Luis, Sta. Teresita	Sta. Teresita
Dec. 4	Saturday	Balete, Malvar, Mataasnakahoy, Sto. Tomas	Sto. Tomas
Dec. 7	Tuesday	Laurel, Talisay	Talisay
Dec. 8	Wednesday	Ibaan, Lobo, San Jose, Taysan	Ibaan
Dec. 9	Thursday	Bauan, Mabini, San Pascual, Tingloy	Bauan
Dec. 10	Friday	Padre Garcia, Rosario, San Juan	Rosario
Dec. 15	Wednesday	Agoncillo, Lemery, San Nicolas, Taal	Taal
Dec. 16	Thursday	Balayan, Calaca, Calatagan	Balayan
Dec. 17	Friday	Lian, Nasugbu, Tuy	Nasugbu

Registration is from 12:00 Noon to 1:15 P.M. and
The Public Hearing proper shall commence at 1:30 P.M.

THIS SERVES AS AN OFFICIAL NOTICE AND INVITATION

By Instruction and Authority of the SANGGUNIANG PANLALAWIGAN:

BENJAMIN DE JESUS NEPALES
Provincial Secretary

ATTESTED:

RICHARD G. RECTO
Vice Governor and
Presiding Officer

"It's Right In Batangas"
DEVELOPMENT THROUGH REPONSIBLE LEGISLATION

Youth enlisted for Mindanao reforestation

COTABATO CITY—Civilian and military authorities enlisted massive youth participation in a reforestation program despite a recent statement made by Environment Secretary Michael Defensor that the government's reforestation program was a failure.

Several groups converged Friday until weekend at Sitio Lumboy in Awang, Datu Odin Sinsuat town to plant trees and discuss ways to protect Maguindanao's forests.

Maj. Gen. Raul Relano, commander of the Army's 6th Infantry Division, described the effort as "winning the battle in all fronts."

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (DENR-ARMM) provided some 500 seedlings, initially for the critical watershed of the Dimapatoy River in Datu Odin Sinsuat and North Upi towns, according to Kahal Kedtag, first district officer of the DENR in Maguindanao.

City Mayor Muslim Sema and Mayor Lester Sinsuat of Datu Odin Sinsuat said college students, who took part in the tree-planting activity, were also provided training on environmental protection and ecological preservation.

Relano said the project, dubbed Community Assistance and Rural Empowerment through Social Services (Cares), is a joint undertaking of the 6th ID and the local government units of this city and Datu Odin Sinsuat town and the forestry colleges of the Mindanao State University-Maguindanao Campus and the Cotabato City State Polytechnic College.

Maguindanao and Sultan Kudarat provinces have been hit in recent months by floods that were largely blamed on illegal logging.

RLA Speaker Pro-Tempore Suharto Midtimbang, author of the ARMM's Regional Sustainable Forest Management Act, said there also appeared to be government negligence and laxity in protecting the environment.

"With so many laws pertaining to forest management as an excuse to tree-cutting and massive logging, who needs to be engaging into illegal logging activities this time," Midtimbang said.

Nash Maulana, PDI Mindanao Bureau

MOURNING JOAN BONDOC

The body of Mahmod Abdulhamin, 54, lies inside a mosque in Rodriguez, Rizal, one of the towns hit by disaster brought by Typhoon "Winnie." His wife keeps watch over Abdulhamin, who was one of dozens killed by floods and rampaging waters brought by the storm.

Leaders of Cordillera worry cost-cutting will remove autonomy

By Vincent Cabreza
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

BAGUIO CITY—Leaders and advocates of Cordillera autonomy expressed concern that President Macapagal-Arroyo's cost-cutting measures will cost them their region.

Malacañang has allowed its departments to dissolve regional offices in the Cordillera Administrative Region, in accordance with an executive order that gave the bureaucracy 100 days to cut costs and control the state deficit, said Leon Dacanay, National Economic and Development Authority Cordillera assistant director.

But dissolving Cordillera offices may violate the conditions set by Executive Order 220.

EO 220, the result of the 1987 peace negotiations between former President Corazon Aquino and slain rebel priest Conrado Balweg, required the government to set up a regional presence in the Cordillera provinces, Dacanay said on Thursday.

It formed the transitory Cordillera region so it could pave the way for an autonomous Cordillera region as prescribed by the 1987 Constitution.

But several regional directors disclosed this week that Malacañang had already studied proposals that would amend or scrap EO 220 to resolve Cordillera government expenditures.

Reports of a new executive order replacing EO 220 have been circulating around Cordillera offices since October but Malacañang officials have not confirmed this.

Should Malacañang scrap EO 220, Benguet, Kalinga, Apayao, Mt. Province, Ifugao, Abra and Baguio City would automatically revert back to the Ilocos region and Cagayan Valley, an INQUIRER source said.

The source said the Cordillera report was leaked after Ms Arroyo merged the Department of Agrarian Reform with the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples and the Presidential Commission on the Urban Poor. The merger created the Department of Land Reform.

"We've been hearing about the same report again and again, but (Communications Director) Silvestre Afable Jr. (who is from Baguio) has not mentioned it. Even former Sagada (Mt. Province) Mayor Tom Killip (who is presidential assistant for the Cordillera) has not alerted us to this report," said another regional director.

The INQUIRER sources said officials who wanted EO 220 scrapped have been arguing about its bureaucratic excesses.

EO 220 also created three governing agencies, which former President Joseph Estrada abolished by withdrawing their budgets.

Ms Arroyo has not reinstated the Cordillera Executive Board, the Cordillera Regional Assembly and the Cordillera Bodong Administration.

"We understand that (former CRA Chair) Sergio Kawi is lobbying to get these agencies revived, and these efforts have simply emboldened the group in Malacañang who want CAR dissolved," the source said.

Lack of peace pulled down ARMM growth

By Nash Maulana
PDI Mindanao Bureau

COTABATO CITY—Peace and security concerns contributed to the 2.2 percent decline in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao's (ARMM) 2003 gross regional domestic product (GRDP) from its all-time high of 4.8 percent in 2002, Gov. Parouk Hussin said.

Hussin said other factors to be blamed for the slowdown included the SARS (severe acute respiratory syndrome) scare, "unfavorable climatic conditions and delayed release of supplementary funds from the national government."

Despite the decline, Hussin said the regions' economy was improving.

He said in 2000, the ARMM's GRDP was negative 0.3 percent. The Estrada administration in 2000 launched an all-out war against the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

The war displaced hundreds of thousands of residents and disrupted the region's agriculture-dependent economy.

Hussin said in 2001, because of economic measures and improved peace and order, the region's economy "rebounded" to 2.5 percent.

Hussin said his administration would work harder with the police and the military to improve security.

He said infrastructure, political and institutional reforms would also be improved.

He thanked the "social rehabilitation and development interventions" of the Growth Equity for Mindanao (GEM) and international donor institutions like the Canadian International Development Agency (CiDA); the Australian Aid for International Development (AusAID); European Union, and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

He said these institutions have helped shape regional development with their social programs that ranged from livelihood projects to assistance in delivery of basic services.

In political and institutional reforms, Hussin said the region's workforce and constituency have been playing their roles well.

"This is not my accomplishment. It is our collective accomplishment as a people," he said.

Hussin said loan contracts with foreign bank creditors for major road projects in Basilan, Lanao del Sur and Maguindanao required national appropriation and approval by the Department of Finance and Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas.

Gov't to give up control of water cost, says study

LA TRINIDAD, Benguet—President Macapagal-Arroyo will soon lose control over domestic water prices due to pressure from foreign governments to start privatizing water distribution in the country, according to a November report of the research group Ibon Foundation.

The Ibon Foundation released the report to the participants in the First Water for the People Northern Luzon Convention held here recently.

The report said Ms Arroyo is opening up all state-owned water utilities to private investors because of the country's commitments to the General Agreement on Trade in Services (Gats).

Gats holds all member countries of the World Trade Organization to a time frame when they should liberalize their service industry sectors from government control.

Like electricity, "profit may become a permanent concern for water distribution" under the Arroyo administration, Arnold Padilla, an Ibon researcher, said.

Padilla said new bulk water supply projects in the cities of Baguio, Cebu, Davao, and Iligan are tied to this agenda. "There are also ongoing efforts to 'corporatize' the water districts in the cities of Calamba, Tacloban, Iloilo and Bacolod," the Ibon report said.

Padilla said water prices in Metro Manila have increased between 226 percent and 348 percent since 1997, due to the privatization of its water systems. *Vincent Cabreza, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

DRY DAY DELFIN MALLARI/PDI SOUTHERN LUZON BUREAU

On dry and sunny days, farmers of Sto. Tomas, Batangas bring out their corn harvest to prepare these for delivery to markets, if not outright sale. In the past, dozens of tons of corn harvest in many parts of the country, particularly Mindanao, rotted because of lack of post-harvest facilities.

Davao execs defend ₱311-M security fund

DAVAO CITY—City officials continue to defend the city mayor's P311 million peace and order budget in the wake of mounting criticisms from militant groups.

The city council has approved a P2.2 billion budget for next year.

At least 16 percent of that, or about P311 million, was earmarked for Mayor Rodrigo Duterte's peace and order program.

Critics of the budget said the peace and order budget was even bigger than what was allocated for social services.

But city officials said the P311 million peace and order budget was justified because of threats from terror groups.

The INQUIRER learned that part of the fund would go to the operating expenses and other needs of the Task Force Davao, which was created to provide more security for the city after the two deadly blasts that killed more than 40 persons.

Harsh

One of the explosions rocked the Davao International Airport.

Mayor Duterte, while defending the peace and order budget, was a bit harsh on critics.

He said those who have been opposing his programs should wait until they become mayors too.

Duterte said the group that criticizes his peace and order budget misinterpreted the data in the 2005 budget for the entire city.

He said contrary to Lorenzana's claims, his office would not get the entire P311 million budget for peace and order.

"If you're cross-eyed, that's your medical problem not ours," he said. *Anthony Allada, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

Giraffe killing pits council against residents

By Jofelle Tesorio
PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

CORON, Palawan—A resident at the Calauit Game Refuge and Wildlife Sanctuary lashed at the Palawan Council for Sustainable Development Staff (PCSDS), an environmental policymaking body in Palawan, for indiscriminately pointing at residents as responsible for killing one of the 25 giraffes in the sanctuary last Sept. 8.

According to Anatolio Vergara, an original resident of Calauit Island and a member of alik Calauit Movement BCM), an organization formed by residents claiming ownership of the island, said it was irresponsible for the PCSDS to tell media that the culprit was a member of the BCM although they had no solid proof.

Vergara, an active member of the Saragpunta, an association of Tagbanuas, said he felt slighted by the PCSDS saying that one of the residents would be charged with poaching and violating the Wildlife Act but without identifying who would be charged.

He said even the guard in the sanctuary did not know what happened to the giraffe.

The giraffe, which cost about P1 million, according to PCSDS executive director Nelson Devanadera, was seen one morning grazing on the island.

It looked weak and suddenly fell, according to the report of the guards.

It had traces of wounds caused by a sharp object, probably bamboo, near the leg that went into its intestines, causing its death.

Vergara said there might be other causes for the animal's death but it should not be blamed on the residents.

It might have accidentally hit some sharp bamboo fences used to protect the vegetable gardens of the residents.

"We have a verbal agreement with PCSDS that the residents will fence their gardens to protect them from animals but the bamboos will not be sharpened," he said.

The BCM officers will go around the island, he said, to check if the residents are abiding by the agreement.

Meanwhile, Calauit residents are pleading to the local government of Busuanga and the PCSDS to allow them to construct an elementary school on the island.

Children from Calauit go to school everyday by crossing the sea on low tide to reach Barangay Quezon about a kilometer away.

They usually cross with their bags on their heads or in their arms to avoid these from getting wet. The water could go as high as their shoulders.

Not every family on the island has a boat to ferry them to the other side.

"We pity the children, especially the very young ones. It's very dangerous for them during the rainy season because the current is strong," Vergara said.

Calauit, a major tourism attraction in Northern Palawan, is home to Palawan's endemic species like Palawan Bearcat, Mousedeer and Palawan Peacock.

Zebra, giraffe and other animals were flown in from Africa during the time of the late strongman Ferdinand Marcos.

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INQUIRER Southern Luzon

Editor **Jun Bandayrel**
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Timely warnings from 'Mr. Typhoon'

By Juan Escandor Jr.
Naga City

WHENEVER a storm brews, David Michael V. Padua, 32, delivers a rare service to people whose activities depend on the weather.

For free, one can visit Padua's website, www.Typhoon2000.com, and be updated on an upcoming storm in the Philippines. The first privately operated website in the country that tracks tropical cyclones every six hours, it was bestowed the People's Choice Award in 1999 by the Philippine Web Awards in the environment category.

Padua, who describes himself as an ordinary guy with a compulsive interest in typhoons, built the website in 1997 and single-handedly operates it up to now. The website has gone a long way with 3.7 million registered hits a month at present. It provides e-mail updates to over a thousand subscribers from all over the world.

But Padua is quick to say that his website does not assume the role of a weather forecasting agency. He warns that the data and information on his pages must not be used to make "life-or-death decisions."

From his own pockets, Padua pays a US-based portal P5,000 a year to maintain his website. He has also bought his own gadget to obtain detailed raw data on the weather.

He interpolates the data with satellite images and information from the Joint Typhoon Warning Center (JTWC) of the United States Navy and Air Force based in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, the United Nations' Regional Specialized Meteorological Center (RSMC), the Japan Meteorological Agency (JMA), and the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa).

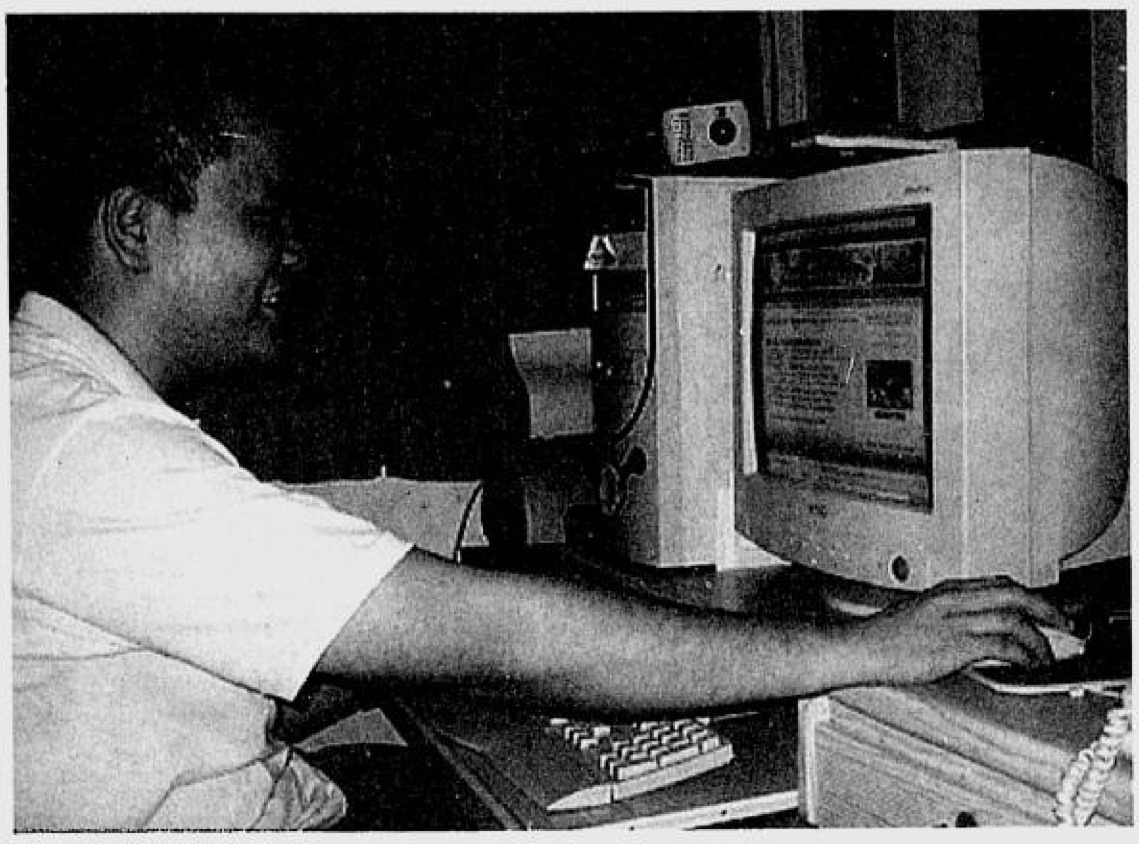
Forecasting skill

Recently, Padua's forecasting skill helped mitigate the disastrous effects of Typhoon "Unding" in Naga City. After Pagasa bungled in its forecast with very late typhoon warning, he immediately called up the mayor, Jesse Robredo, to warn him that the typhoon was approaching in just a few hours.

Robredo hastily called a meeting of the disaster coordinating council in the late afternoon on Nov. 19 to prepare the communities of impending danger.

When Unding left the city, not a single human life was lost even though Pagasa raised Signal No. 3 at around 10:30 p.m.—when the typhoon was then raging.

Padua has somewhat established himself as one of the most active members of the exclusive Global Cyclone Discussion Group with around 60 members from the US, United Kingdom, Australia, Guam, Mauritius, France, Hungary and Brazil. The storm enthusiasts exchange information and ideas on the weather phenomenon through e-mail.



PADUA updates his webpages every six hours when storms develop in the Asia-Pacific region. JUAN ESCANDOR JR.

Padua said his passion to feed web browsers the latest development of passing storms started when he was barely in school.

His mother Emerita recalled that he had displayed such an unusual interest in typhoons when he was just 5 years old. Whenever a storm approaches, the young boy would always make a fuss, if only to see what was going on outside, she said.

Adrenalin rush

"Every time a typhoon comes into the Philippine area of responsibility, I have an adrenalin rush which makes me stay awake even for a straight 48 hours," Padua said. He could not sleep until it passes, he added.

At 13, Padua was the youngest participant in a workshop sponsored by Pagasa. He was one of those who immediately learned the technology of plotting typhoons and religiously applied and continuously improved the skills he acquired.

Showing an old newspaper page, Padua said the diagram on it was the first work he had done that correctly plotted the path of Typhoon "Saling" on Oct. 11, 1989. He was only 17 then.

Arthur Balang, chief meteorological officer of Pagasa in Camarines Sur, said that when Padua was still a high school student at the Naga College Foundation (NCF), he would come to the weather agency during typhoons and engage them in serious discussion while they tracked the storm.

Padua recalls that his passion for typhoon monitoring had sometimes irked authorities. In one instance, while he was still in high school, he called up a radio station and gave updates of the typhoon. A Pagasa official immediately told him to refrain from announcing unofficial warning, he said.

Reprimand

Despite the reprimand, Padua said he continued to feed typhoon updates to the local radio station off the air.

When he studied at the University of the Philippines Diliman in Quezon City in 1991, he could have enrolled in a meteorological course, but it was only offered to post-graduate students. He settled for a four-year Bachelor of Science in Geography.

A younger sister, Michelle, who was also studying at UP then, revealed that her brother's passion for typhoon tracking continued in college.

Whenever a typhoon came, her brother would get excited, she said, and he would not miss informing friends about the latest developments.

"At the Molave Hall where he was a resident, he earned the name 'Mr. Typhoon,'" she exclaimed.

After graduating from college in 1995, Padua accepted a teaching job at the NCF. Later, he was assigned as Internet systems administrator of the school, a position that he still holds today.

Panaw Sa Kalinga Peace Conference

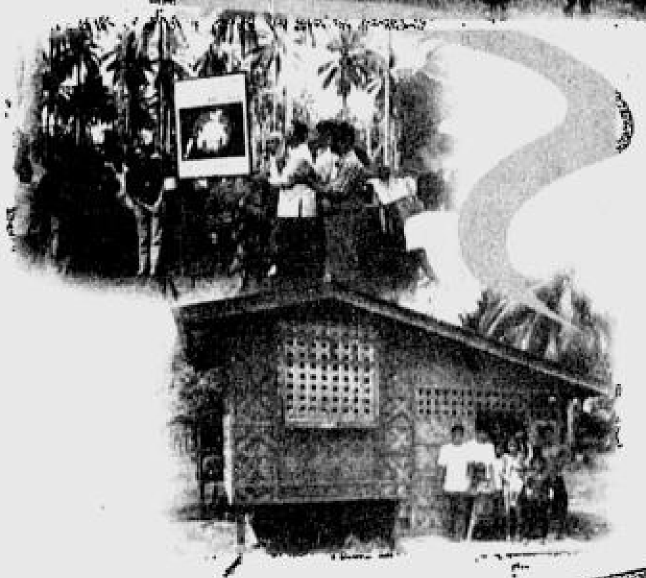
It has been four years since Tabang Mindanaw – Integrated Return and Rehabilitation Program (TM-IRRP) started the journey with the Sanctuaries for Peace and other stakeholders. Together it found ways to rebuild and reestablish the peoples' vision and commitment to peace. Through these years, many inspiring stories unfolded, and many challenges encountered, transformed into new opportunities for learning and development. These stories are waiting to be told among fellow trail seekers of peace.

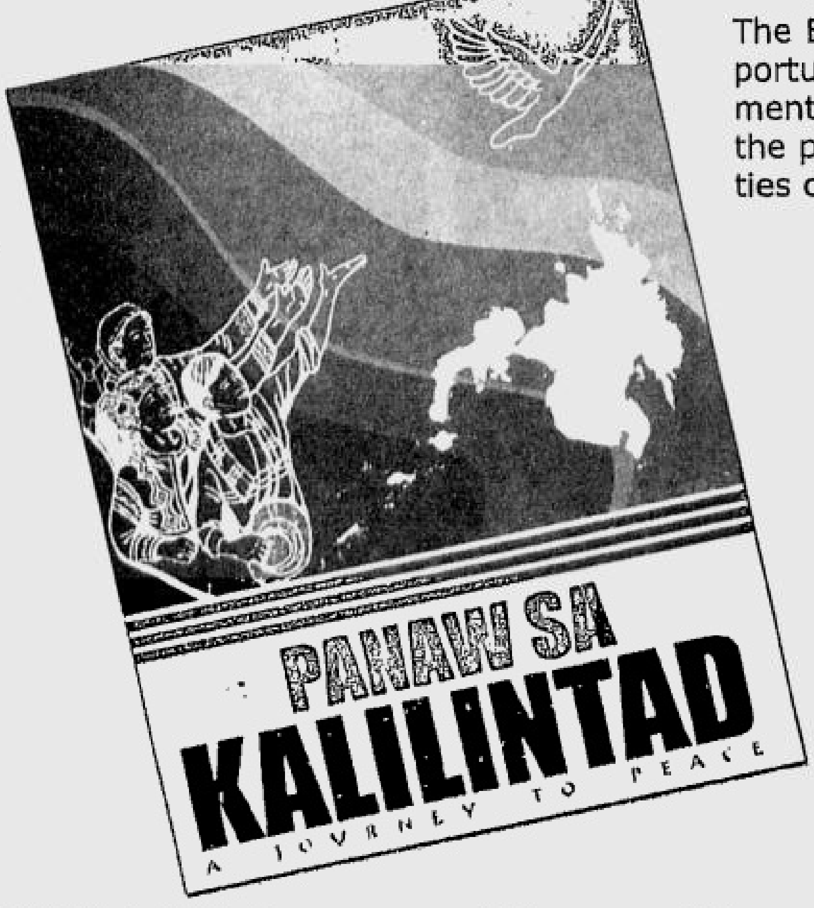
The Philippines – Canada Development Fund (PCDF) and the Tabang Mindanaw – Integrated Return and Rehabilitation Program (TM-IRRP) will hold a three-day peace and development conference entitled, PANAW SA KALINAW (A Journey to Peace), to share the successful experiences of communities within the sanctuaries for peace and hopefully stimulate more aspirations and transformative action within and outside the sanctuaries for peace communities.

The conference will have exhibits and festivities. Incorporated in the conference are the launchings of a PEACE MUSEUM and a book, entitled PANAW SA KALILINTAD, about the TM-IRRP experience with the Sanctuaries for Peace. These will all be held in the Royal Mandaya Hotel, Davao City, from December 2 to 4, 2004.

The said conference will have Ambassador Peter Sutherland of the Canadian Embassy, Secretary Teresita Deles, Presidential Adviser to the Peace Process and members of the Tabang Mindanaw Task Force represented by Ambassador Howard Dee and Ms. Margie Moran-Floirendo.

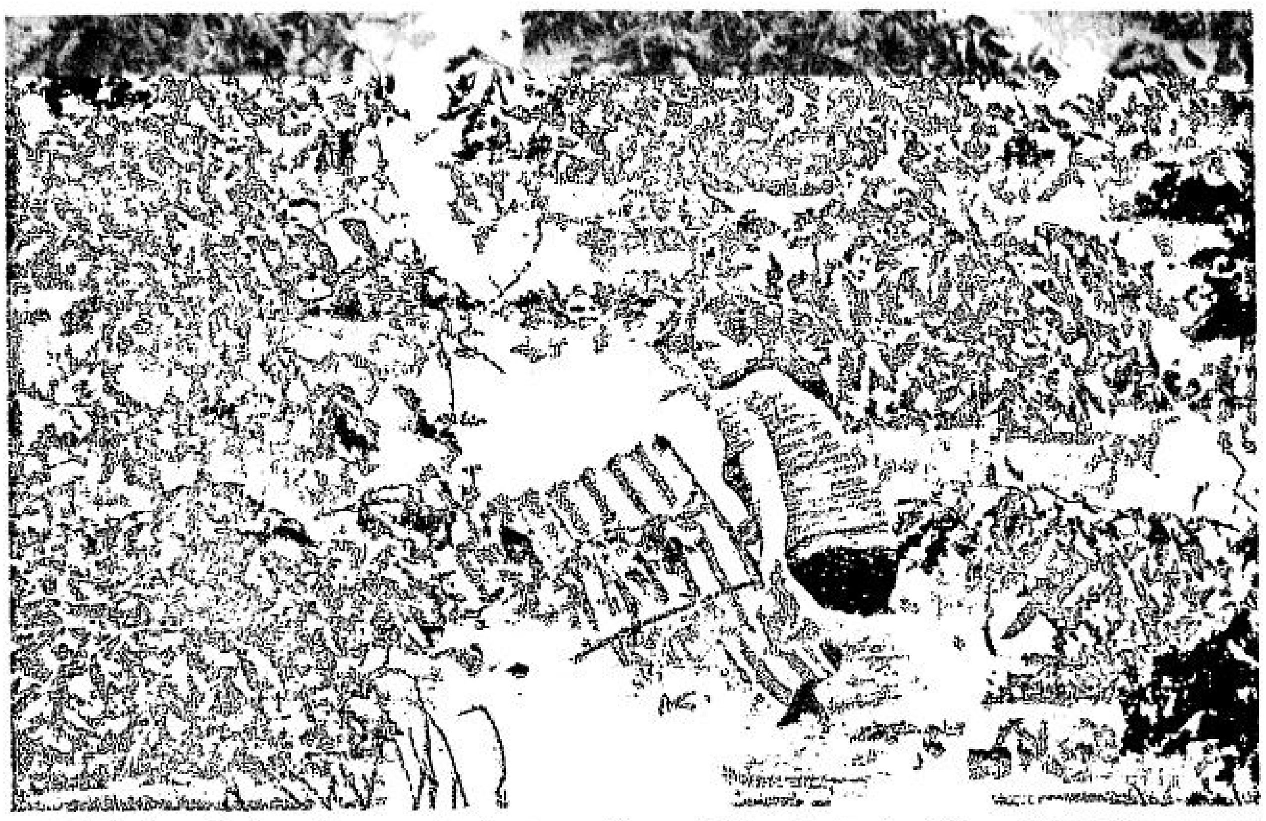
The Bangsamoro, the Lumads and Christians of Mindanao would like to take this opportunity to thank all the people, groups and individuals, peace advocates, government and non-government agencies for all the support that they have contributed for the past four years in transforming the communities devastated by war to communities of peace.





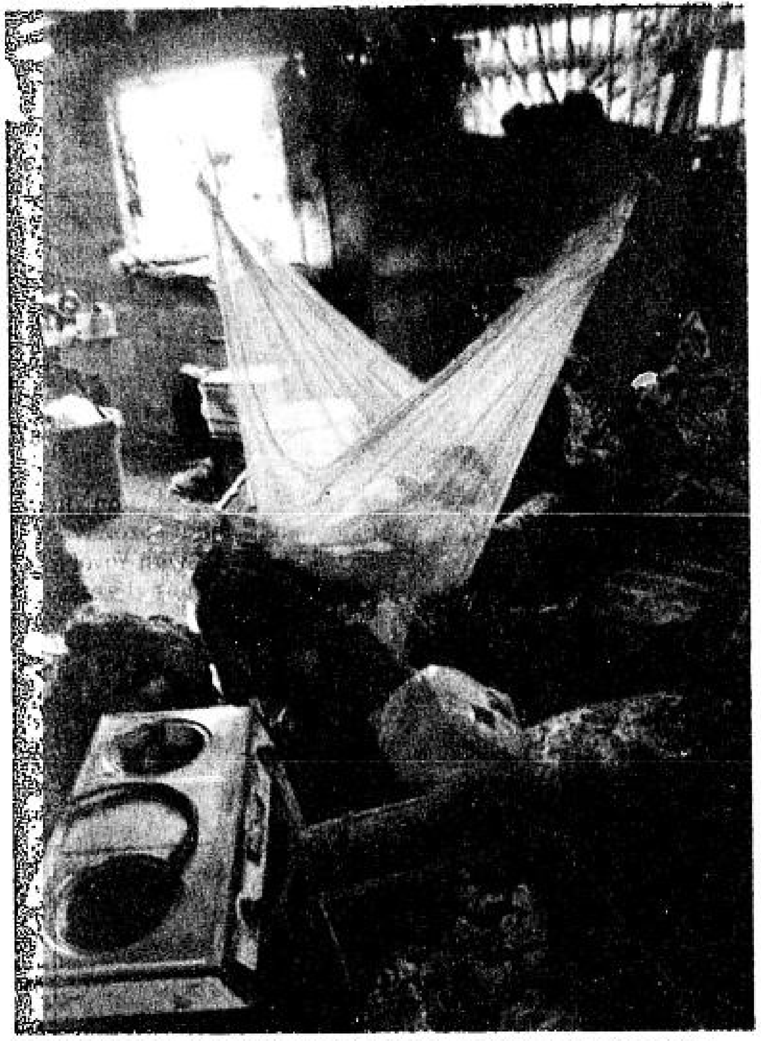
WINNIE'S WET AND WILD FURY

FATHER and son loaded down with their belongings leave their home in Dingalan, Aurora, for higher, safer ground. ROGER MARGALLO



RAISE high the roof, at least this woman is trying to save it from waist-deep floodwaters in Gapan, Nueva Ecija. ERIK ARAZAS

Delayed aid to evacuees in Infanta may cause them to just die



THE INNOCENT slumbers watched by its mother, unmindful of the squalor of their home in Barangay San Jose, Rodriguez, Rizal. JOAN BONDOC

WASN'T it only yesterday that President Arroyo was consoling the victims of Typhoon "Violeta"? At it again with Teresita Quizan in Rizal. JOAN BONDOC

AT A HOUSE that "Winnie" wrecked in Rodriguez, Rizal, two children walk away hand in hand through the thick mud on the floor. JOAN BONDOC

A BABY is cradled by his mother in Dingalan, Aurora. ROGER MARGALLO

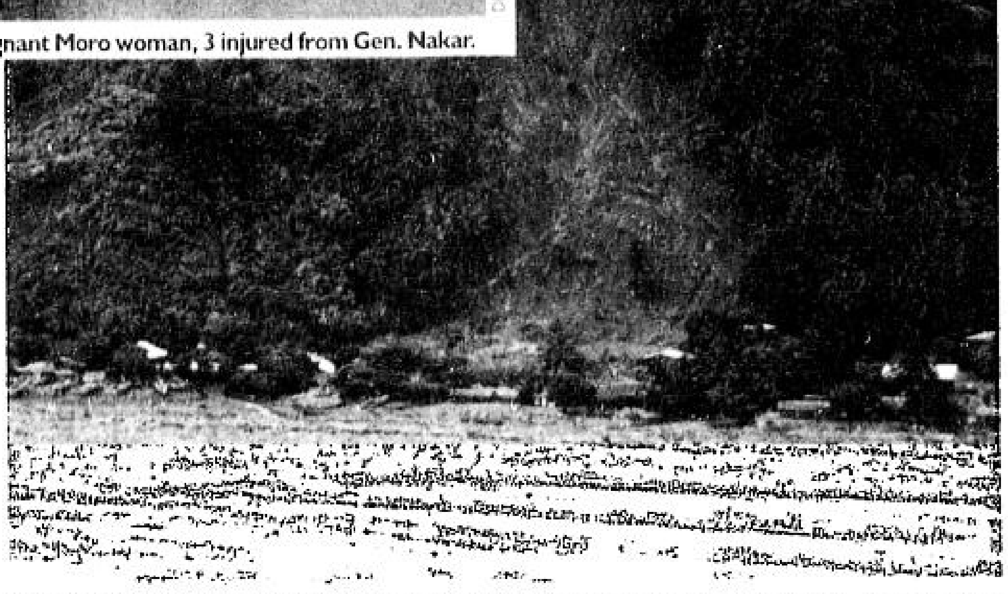
NOT EXACTLY ducks in water at San Idelfonso, Bulacan. ERIK ARAZAS

SURVIVORS Dante Runes and his wife Florence in Concepcion, Marikina. JOAN BONDOC

DELFIN MALLARI JR. PDI SOUTHERN LUZON BUREAU

PAF chopper airlifts pregnant Moro woman, 3 injured from Gen. Nakar.

WHILE the getting is good, the enterprising gather all the logs they can get their hands on in Candaba, Pampanga. RAFFY LERMA



THE SHORELINE of Infanta, Quezon, is edged with the litter of logs and more logs. ROGER MARGALLO

Forest rangers to be armed, anti-illegal logging unit formed

From page A1

wake-up call for us to join hands in preserving the environment and stepping up reforestation."

Environment Secretary Michael Defensor yesterday announced the arming of forest rangers and the appointment of a retired Scout Ranger general to man the country's forests.

Defensor also instructed environment and natural resource officers along the path of coming typhoons to advise residents about the danger they faced. "This will now be a standard operating procedure when there is a typhoon threat," he said at a news conference at the DENR central office in Quezon City.

Defensor also ordered DENR field officials to coordinate with local government units should the need for an evacuation arise.

Defensor also announced the formation of the DENR Anti-Illegal Logging Task Force and the appointment of retired Lt. Gen. Alfonso Dagudag as head of the task force.

Dagudag, who used to head the Army's Southern Luzon Command, is familiar with the Sierra Madre range and other forest systems in the area. He also belonged to the military's elite Scout Ranger Regiment.

"We will give it our best shot," Dagudag said.

According to Dagudag, the first order of the day is the retraining of forest rangers before they are issued firearms.

Philippine National Police Director General Edgar Aglipay said the PNP would provide firearms to about 2,000 forest guard nationwide.

"We believe this will be a deterrent (to illegal logging) because illegal loggers will now know that we mean business," Aglipay told reporters in an ambush interview in Camp Crame.

Lack of funds

The DENR official in northern Quezon said efforts to protect the forests had been hampered by lack of funds.

"I was assigned here for barely a year. All illegal logging activities in Sierra Madre had started from way, way back. We're doing our best in curbing illegal logging but we could only do so much," Federico Ocampo, community environment and natural resources officer based in Real town, said in a mobile phone interview.

"We only have a measly P44,000 for the whole 2004 in our anti-illegal logging operations," he said.

"Most of the time, we dig in our own pockets just to conduct an effective campaign."

He said the DENR-Real office covered a total of 122,000 hectares of forest land encompassing Infanta, Real, General Nakar and the five island municipalities of Polilio Island.

Aside from the lack of funds, Ocampo said his office only had 35 forest rangers composed of 20 men and 15 women.

Most of the women rangers are assigned to do office work. "And five of my male forest rangers are now old and no longer fit to perform effective forest protection," Ocampo said.

"How would my staff face all the armed men providing security to illegal loggers?" he added.

No reforestation

Ocampo admitted there was no massive reforestation in Sierra Madre.

"There is no government reforestation project to speak of because of lack of funds. We are being required to maintain seed production nursery but there is no fund for reforestation project," he explained.

"What usually happened is that we only get ourselves involved in occasional tree planting programs initiated by private sectors, mostly along the sides of the highways, which is not sufficient if we really want to offset the historical environmental destruction," he added.

Ocampo, last year's Civil Service Commission "Lingkod Bayan" awardee, also scored the lack of alternative livelihood programs for local residents who all depended on illegal logging for a living.

Illegal logging as livelihood

He cited the admission of General Nakar Mayor Hernando Avellaneda that almost 40 percent of his constituents rely on illegal logging for their livelihood. These village-based illegal loggers supply the raw materials for the lucrative wood-based industry in northern Quezon.

General Nakar has a land area of 134,390 hectares, 95 percent of which lies at the center of the Sierra Madre.

It has an estimated population of 25,000, including at least 3,000 Agta tribal folk.

Ocampo stressed that if the government really wanted to end the illegal logging activities on all remaining forests, "It should offer alternative livelihood for the people who support and depend on illegal logging for a living."

Senate reaction

Even so, Sen. Richard Gordon called for an investigation into the disaster. "For years the Department of Environment and Natural Resources has failed to go after the illegal loggers operating in many parts of the country," he told reporters.

Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Q. Pimentel Jr. renewed his call for an immediate enactment of the 25-year ban on commercial logging, while opposition Sen. Jamby Madrigal proposed a 50-year ban on all logging activities.

"We should have imposed a total log ban a long time ago to stop the loss and degradation of our forests. As a consequence of incessant forest destruction, at the rate of about 200,000 hectares a year, our people are paying a heavy price in terms of loss of lives and properties," Pimentel said.

Heinous crime

Besides advocating a total log ban, Madrigal said she would file a bill making illegal logging a heinous crime.

"Somebody has to be accountable for the butchering of these people. This is unforgivable—people have died, children and entire families are wiped out," she said. *With reports from Michael Lim Ubac, Norman Bordadora, Christian V. Esguerra in Manila; Delfin T. Mallari Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau; AP and AFP*

Illegal logging make floods deadlier

DECADES of illegal logging, unusually high rainfall and geography have made floods in the country deadlier, loosening the soil of denuded mountains and triggering devastating landslides. Many of the fatalities in the latest storm were asleep late Monday when they were washed away by swiftly cascading soil and logs.

A recent US-funded project concluded that the Philippines was losing more than 100,000 hectares of forest every year. Other experts say less than 3 percent of the country's primary forest remains intact.

Vice President Noli de Castro said the country had still not learned the lessons from landslides and flooding in 1991 on the island of Leyte which left thousands dead.

"Illegal logging was found to be the main contributor to that disaster," De Castro said in a statement.

The government's chief weather forecaster, Frisco Nilo, said the soil in the foothills of Sierra Madre, facing the Pacific Ocean, was already saturated with water from the previous typhoon when heavy rains loosened the earth and caused it to tumble down.

Saturation level

Geography has played its part too. The town of Infanta in Quezon, one of the hardest-hit areas, is usually the first port of call for an average of 19 typhoons and tropical storms that hit the country every year, according to Nilo.

Government hydrologist Richard Orendain said although the residents of Infanta and nearby towns of Real and General Nakar in Quezon were used to typhoons, what they probably failed to anticipate was the consequences of the amount of rainfall that fell on the region over the past week.

Orendain told Agence France Presse that on Sunday alone about 144 mm of rain fell over the region. The monthly average for November is 611 millimeters.

He said the ground water table had "probably reached saturation point" noting that the area was hard hit by another storm just a week earlier. "So the water had nowhere to go," he said.

Priest dies while trying to save others

From page A1

rescue and relief operations. *(See related story on this page.)*

On another front, the other, less well-known face of the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) has emerged.

Long associated with the government response to maritime disasters, the PCG fielded its two helicopters on Tuesday and yesterday to rescue the beleaguered residents of Quezon, ferry the injured to Metro Manila hospitals, and bring relief goods to displaced residents of other provinces.

A total of 36 injured people, including 12 children, were airlifted to the PCG headquarters in Manila, where ambulances waited. The injuries involved broken bones, bruises, and cuts on the head, face and chest.

"We made sure that each helicopter only carried the pilot and one other person so that the rest of the space would be maximized for the sick and wounded," said PCG spokesperson Lt. Armand Balilo.

Each helicopter had room for four adults or five to six children—as well as relief goods, body bags and lime—per trip.

Balilo said four pilots were on continuous duty with very little time to rest.

"They wanted to take as many trips as possible so that they could bring many of the wounded people to Manila," he said.

The PCG helicopters made three flights to Quezon on Tuesday. Yesterday, they completed five flights by mid-afternoon alone.

Each round trip took about an hour and a half.

Donation drive

Cebu's city and provincial governments are moving to help the storm victims in Luzon while preparing for the possible effects of incoming Typhoon "Yoyong."

Cebu City Mayor Tomas Osmeña yesterday announced the launch of a three-day relief operation drive and called on Cebuanos to donate such items as canned goods, blankets and used clothing.

He said donations may be forwarded to barangay halls, for pick up every afternoon by multicabs from the City Transport Services.

The collected donations will be turned over to the national government through the Department of Social Welfare and Development, city information officer Nagiel Bañacia said.

International pledges

Cebu Gov. Gwendolyn Garcia said the provincial government would extend financial assistance to the devastated towns in Luzon, to be taken from its calamity fund.

In Manila, four international organizations yesterday pledged a total of $190,000 worth of food and relief items for the victims of the three typhoons that had ravaged Luzon since Nov. 14.

"Your help will go a long way," Defense Secretary Avelino Cruz said upon receiving the pledges from the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), UN Children's Fund, UN Food and Drug Organization, and Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (Ocha).

The UNDP, through Deborah Landey, pledged $100,000, while the Unicef, represented by senior program officer Colin Davis, pledged $40,000, according to Ros Manlangit, chief of public affairs at the Department of National Defense.

Manlangit said Kyo Naka, a deputy representative of the UNDP and Ocha, also pledged $50,000.

Cruz likewise appealed for search-and-rescue aircraft and equipment from the United States, Australia, Japan and Asean countries.

"Our resources are being stretched out, so we are looking at the possibility of borrowing helicopters from foreign countries and private corporations," he told reporters during a briefing at the National Defense Coordination Council headquarters.

Cruz said the situation in Southern and Central Luzon was expected to worsen with Yoyong expected to slam against the eastern seaboard of Luzon today.

"We need to do massive relief operations once Yoyong has passed, and we need helicopters to do this," he said. *Reports from Leila B. Salaverria and Fe Zamora in Manila; Jhunnex Napallacan, PDI Visayas Bureau*

100 feared dead as evacuation center collapses

ON TOP of the all-around misery, 100 people are missing and feared dead after an evacuation center in the flood-hit town of Real in Quezon collapsed, officials said yesterday.

"The people went there to use the building as an evacuation center but it collapsed. They are trapped there and missing, but local officials have presumed they are dead," said Defense Undersecretary Ernesto Carolina.

The collapse left about 100 dead or missing, Carolina said. Twenty-five bodies have so far been recovered from the site.

The casualties are among the nearly 500 people dead or missing in three eastern Philippine towns since massive landslides and floods pummeled the area two days ago.

The building, part of a beach resort, collapsed late Monday at the height of Tropical Depression "Winnie," Carolina said. *AFP*

Donations for Infanta victims

DONATIONS of food, medicine, water, blanket and clothes for typhoon victims in Infanta, Quezon, can be coursed through Fr. Francis Lucas at the Catholic Media Network, 2307 Pedro Gil St., Sta. Ana, Metro Manila. Tel. No. 563-7321. Donors may also look for Ms Cecille Roxas. Fr. Lucas may also be reached at tel. nos. 0918-927-5813 or 725-8438.

Other drop-off points are:

- 5 Marilag St., Teachers' Village, QC
- Mt. Carmel Shrine, 5th Street, Broadway, QC

Angelo finds new job as Lapid's driver

From page A1

tion star and now Sen. Lito Lapid.

De la Cruz went to the Senate yesterday to seal the deal with Lapid, his province mate in Pampanga.

Lapid told reporters that De la Cruz would also serve as his adviser on overseas Filipino workers.

De la Cruz was the first Filipino to be taken hostage by Iraqi militants last July. He was released after the government agreed to pull out its humanitarian mission in US-occupied Iraq ahead of schedule to comply with the demands of his captors.

Lapid said he met De la Cruz when the latter returned home from his ordeal and had promised to help his family.

De la Cruz said it was Lapid who offered him the job.

"I would like to thank Senator Lapid and his son (Pampanga Gov. Mark Lapid) for taking care of me," the former truck driver said in Filipino.

Asked why he wanted a new job, De la Cruz said he had to earn more money since he has eight children.

"I have eight children and I'm just a tricycle driver, what will happen to us?" he said.

Asked what happened to the financial assistance given to him following his return home, De la Cruz said that only a private firm gave him the tricycle he was driving to earn money for his family.

Lapid said De la Cruz would start his new job as soon as his papers are fixed.

Reporters then took the opportunity to ask De là Cruz about former hostage Angelito Nayan and Roberto Tarongoy, who is still being held by Iraqi militants.

He said he felt sad for Tarongoy, having experienced being under the hands of kidnappers in Baghdad.

"The experience is also scary," De la Cruz said.

He said what he and the people could do was to pray for Tarongoy's immediate release.

As for Nayan, he said that should he get the chance to meet the diplomat who has just returned home after being held for 26 days by Afghan rebels, he would tell him how happy he was that he was freed.

Asked how President Arroyo was doing in meeting the crisis involving Filipinos being taken hostage by foreign militants, he said the President was doing the right thing so far.

"Nayan and I are now here with the help of the government," he said.

10 soldiers killed on combat patrol or rescue mission?

From page A1

spokesperson of the military's Northern Luzon Command (Nolcom), told the INQUIRER by telephone on Tuesday night.

Reports in Camp Aguinaldo identified one of the fatalities as 1st Lt. Ben Puyao. The slain and wounded soldiers belonged to the 56th Infantry Battalion based in Norzagaray town.

Monta said the unit, composed of 19 soldiers led by Puyao, broke off from a relief distribution mission in Bulacan to check reports on the presence of rebels in Barangay Pasong Bangkal in San Rafael.

"The NPAs took advantage of the bad weather. The soldiers were there to carry out civic missions," Monta said. "They were overpowered."

The soldiers, according to Monta, clashed with 80 rebels led by a certain Ka Delfin of the NPA Bulacan's Eastern Command.

But the NPA command in Bulacan said the soldiers were not on a mission to rescue victims of Typhoon "Winnie" and provide relief assistance to them.

They were on their way to a counterinsurgency operation in the upland towns of Angat, Pandi, Norzagaray, Doña Remedios Trinidad and San Ildefonso, the rebels said in a statement faxed to the INQUIRER. Pasong Bangkal in San Rafael is far from the flooded areas, they said.

Reports from the Bulacan police said one rebel was killed in the clash, but these could not be independently confirmed.

3-hour gun battle

Lt. Rey Dequito, head of the 56th IB's Charlie Company, said the gunfight lasted for almost three hours, from 1:40 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Monta said the recovery of the bodies of the soldiers—a first lieutenant and nine enlisted men—ended at past 9 p.m. Tuesday.

Lt. Col. Noel Clement, battalion commander, reported that the rebels took 18 firearms from the soldiers after the firefight.

Fighting to the end

The three unhurt soldiers of the unit fought off the rebels until troop reinforcements arrived. "They fought to the end," Monta said, citing Clement's report.

Lt. Gen. Romeo Dominguez, Nolcom chief, sent soldiers to the area to pursue the rebels.

Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye condemned the attack "as a cowardly and criminal act of the highest order."

"It is supposed to be a time for all of us to extend a helping hand to those who were affected by misfortune, not a dark opportunity to commit murder," Bunye added.

But Gregorio "Ka Roger" Rosal, spokesperson of the Communist Party of the Philippines, said Nolcom's statements showed that the soldiers "had detached (themselves) from ongoing rescue operations (in Bulacan) precisely to conduct military operations against the NPA."

'Armed and dangerous'

"They were no longer on a 'mercy mission' but were armed, dangerous and on the offensive," Rosal said in a statement sent to media organizations yesterday. He, however, said he had yet to receive a report from the NPA unit involved in the clash.

Rosal called on the military "to respect the plight of the victims and refrain from conducting offensive military operations under the guise of relief-and-rescue operations."

The 8,600-strong NPA and its political leadership have been waging a Maoist campaign against the government for 35 years. The communists announced in October that they would step up their attacks.

The rebels suspended peace talks with the government in August after failing to persuade the United States and European countries to remove them from their lists of groups considered international terrorists.

'Enemies of state'

Top defense and military officials yesterday insisted that the soldiers were not on combat patrol, but were actually on rescue operations.

Initially, Lt. Col. Buenaventura Pascual, Armed Forces information officer, said the soldiers were "on combat patrol" when they encountered the rebels. But late Tuesday night, he sent a text message to defense reporters, saying the soldiers were on a "rescue mission."

"I just hope that they (NPA rebels) do not harass the soldiers as they go about their search-and-rescue mission," Defense Secretary Avelino Cruz Jr. said.

AFP Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Efren Abu said soldiers should be on alert because "the enemies of the state will take advantage of anything that is favorable to them."

"They (NPA leaders) say that they are for the people, yet where were they when the people of Bulacan needed them? Worse, they ambushed the soldiers who were on their way to help the victim of the typhoon," Col. Danilo Servando, chief of the Army's Civil Affairs Group, said in a statement.

Treachery

"The NPAs took advantage of the situation. The NPAs resorted to treachery while we are doing a noble cause," Monta said in a statement released in Camp Aguinaldo yesterday. *With reports from Delfin T. Mallari Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau; Fe Zamora in Manila; and INQUIRER wires*

Storm death toll hits 500

From page A1

The rains have resulted in a casualty count composed of at least 500 dead and missing.

Agence France Presse quoted Social Welfare Secretary Corazon Soliman as saying that her department had recorded 306 deaths in the towns of Real, Infanta and General Nakar in Quezon.

Another 150 people were listed missing in Real, including those who had sought shelter in an evacuation center that collapsed. *(See box on Page A21.)*

Another 39 people were killed and two others were listed as missing in other parts of the Philippines affected by the floods, a civil defense official said.

Deceda said the total number of reported casualties in northern Quezon had risen to 342.

He said police in Infanta had reported at least 100 dead and 50 missing; Real, 150 dead and 49 missing; and General Nakar, at least 92 dead and 40 missing.

Quezon police also reported that on Monday, one Vilma Ello, 45, drowned in the flash floods in Burdeos town on Polillio island.

Henry Buzar, coordinator of the Quezon Disaster Coordinating Council, said 10 corpses were recovered yesterday in the seas off Lamon Bay fronting Barangay Cagsiay in Mauban town.

Hunger, thirst, cold, darkness

More than 100 survived a landslide in Infanta, but they lost their loved ones and their homes, and are now suffering hunger, thirst and cold, Rev. Mario Van Loon, a Dutch missioner deacon in Infanta, told the INQUIRER.

The refugees are being housed at the Youth Center run by the Alagad ni Maria priests, Van Loon said, adding that the center was now running out of food and water and that delayed assistance might cause them "to just die one by one."

Quoting reports from the Carmelites' office in Infanta, Van Loon said the priests of the prelature headed by the Most Rev. Rolando Tria Tirona, were appealing for bottled water, instant food, clothing and portable lights.

He said he was to have returned to Infanta from the main Carmelites' office in Quezon City but was prevented by the heavy rains.

He said it was total darkness at night in Infanta, General Nakar and Real, and that the Infanta residents' only means of communication was through the Carmelite fathers.

The deacon said that because of the damaged roads and bridges, Bishop Tirona had to take a military helicopter to visit refugees in General Nakar, only to be stranded there. He said the bishop's mobile phone had given out and could not be recharged.

Van Loon said he was relieved to hear news that the US government had expressed its desire to help.

But he warned: "They must do it quickly lest the aid come too late."

Body bags and lime

Bad weather and blocked roads prevented authorities from delivering relief supplies to the towns of Real, Infanta and General Nakar.

Rep. Rafael Nantes said he had formed volunteer groups that would make the trek to bring food, medicines, clothes and blankets to the victims.

"They will walk, swim and hike on the mountains if necessary just to reach the calamity victims," he said in a phone interview.

Nantes, Vice President Noli de Castro and Social Welfare Secretary Soliman were aboard an Air Force helicopter that tried in vain to land in Infanta on Tuesday afternoon and early yesterday.

Among the goods to be delivered were 300 body bags, as well as lime—"to prevent the spread of diseases in a sorry situation like this," the congressman said.

In Manila, Defense Undersecretary Ernesto Carolina said there was now a shortage of body bags in Quezon.

"From today to tomorrow, we can expect the situation to get worse," he said.

Soliman said survivors had complained that funeral parlors were turning away bodies.

She said the funeral parlors did not want to accept the bodies "because they don't know who will pay for the expenses."

Defense Secretary Avelino Cruz, who also heads the National Disaster Coordinating Council, said it would shoulder the expenses. He ordered the Department of Health to coordinate with the funeral parlor owners.

'It's raining again'

Amid the foreboding atmosphere of dark skies and howling winds in Real, hungry dogs caked with mud roamed streets strewn with logs and huge rocks that had smashed through the town.

A man with a washing machine on his back and another man bearing his 2-year-old son begged for slots aboard a lone military truck evacuating the residents.

"Hurry up, it's raining again!" bellowed rescue worker Andrew Lanita.

Another rescue worker piggy-backed a frail, 80-year-old woman onto the truck.

"There was a loud rumbling, like a clap of thunder up in the mountains. In less than seconds our house was gone," said Maragondon resident Freddie Lanuza, 34, who miraculously survived along with all 13 other members of his household.

"We waited for help for two days but none came. We had to leave; otherwise, we would starve to death," he added.

Nantes said that during their meeting on Tuesday evening, President Macapagal-Arroyo ordered the immediate release of funds for the reconstruction of the heavily damaged Tignoan bridge in Real and the Agus bridge connecting Infanta and General Nakar.

Maj. Gen. Pedro Cabuay, commander of the Armed Forces' Southern Luzon Command, said he would dispatch at least 300 soldiers to help bring relief goods to the victims.

Landslides along the Bongabon-Baler Road connecting the provinces of Nueva Ecija and Aurora have made the entire 36-km stretch impassable, said Ramon Aquino, Department of Public Works and Highways director in Central Luzon.

The only access to Aurora now is the Pantabangan Road, Aquino said.

The San Leonardo stretch of the Maharlika Road remains flooded and impassable.

Aquino said traversing the La Paz (Tarlac)-Zaragoza-Sta. Rosa (Nueva Ecija) Road would be dangerous because water currents at the spillway there were strong.

Other provinces

In Bulacan, four people were reported drowned in flash floods and another killed in a landslide on Monday.

The floods affected 86 villages in the towns of San Miguel, Angat, Marilao, Meycauayan, Norzagaray, Bocaue, San Ildefonso, Sta. Maria, Baliuag and San Rafael.

A total of 61 houses were reported washed away by strong currents in San Miguel, Baliuag and Angat towns.

The Angat Dam continued to release water as the dam's level reached 216.67 meters on Tuesday afternoon, breaching the critical level of 214 m.

In Isabela, two men were reported killed and two others were reported missing in the flash floods.

At least 190 villages in Isabela's 35 towns and two cities were reported flooded.

In Cagayan, many passengers remained stranded with no buses leaving or arriving from Metro Manila in the past two days.

The rising Pinacanauan River rendered the Tawi bridge in Peñablanca town and the Maguilling bridge in Tuao town impassable. *Reports from Delfin T. Mallari Jr. and Romulo O. Ponte, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau; Tonette Orejas, Carmela Reyes and Anselmo Roque, PDI Central Luzon Desk; Villamor Visaya Jr. and Estanislao Caldez, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau; Fe Zamora in Manila; AFP*

P96-M crops destroyed

THE THREE recent typhoons destroyed at least P96 million worth of rice and corn crops, provincial agriculture reports said.

Pedro Caabay, engineer at the National Irrigation Administration-Magat River Integrated Irrigation System, said the water in Magat Dam had reached the critical 193-m level, forcing officials to release water on Wednesday.

Storm signals up as 'Yoyong' roars toward Luzon

From page A1

gasinan, Nueva Vizcaya, Benguet, La Union, Ifugao, Mt. Province, Ilocos provinces, Abra, Kalinga, Cagayan, Apayao, Northern Samar and Eastern Samar.

Storm Signal No. 1 has been raised over Metro Manila, Masbate, Romblon, Mindoro provinces, Lubang Island, Batangas, Cavite, Bataan, Zambales, Pampanga, Tarlac, Batanes, Western Samar, Leyte provinces, Biliran Island and Dinagat Island.

Pagasa advised residents in low-lying areas and near mountain slopes to take precautions against flash floods and landslides.

A day after sea vessels were allowed to sail from Bicol, the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) yesterday suspended the travel of ships from the region after storm signal No. 1 was raised over the area because of Yoyong.

"As soon as signal No. 1 is declared in an area, we automatically suspend the trips of vessels weighing 1,000 gross tons and below," PCG spokesperson Lt. Armand Balilo said.

The ships prohibited from traveling from Bicol were bound for Manila and provinces in the Visayas.

Stranded

On Monday, 900 passengers were stranded by Winnie but they were able to leave on Tuesday when the weather had cleared.

At least 1,068 passengers in different ports in Bicol were stranded due to the cancellation of the trips, according to the Office of Civil Defense (OCD) in the region.

As of 2 p.m. yesterday, 375 passengers were stranded in Pilar Port in Sorsogon; 340 in Matnog, also in Sorsogon, and 28 in Bulan, according to a report from the Provincial Disaster Coordinating Council (PDCC) to the OCD.

A total of 230 passengers bound for Catanduanes were also stranded in Tabaco City; 15 in Catanduanes; 50 in Masbate, and 30 in Sabang, Camarines Sur.

At least 833 passengers and 57 trucks and buses were stranded yesterday in the two ports of Allen, Northern Samar, the main gateway for passengers and cargo bound for Luzon.

The PCG prevented inter-island vessels from leaving the ports in Northern Samar after the province was placed under storm signal No. 2. A report from the OCD in Eastern Visayas said the stranded passengers were on board 14 buses and 43 trucks.

OCD Regional Director Arnel Capili said the OCD had prepared contingency plans for Catanduanes in coordination with the PDCC of the province and the Philippine Army Relief Team.

A lack of rescue boats

"There is a big probability that Catanduanes might experience what happened to Dingalan, Aurora, and Quezon because it suffered a lot in the previous typhoons," Capili said.

In Camarines Sur, Gov. Luis Raymund Villafuerte Jr. ordered the deployment of 100 personnel from the different executive departments to respond to emergencies.

They will be assisted by the Philippine National Police and Philippine Army personnel should Yoyong hit the province.

Villafuerte raised concern over limited number of rescue boats under the disposal of the provincial government.

In case of massive flooding, most of the local government units in the province have at their disposal one rescue boat each, according to the province.

Hotline

Villafuerte said the PDCC had already reestablished a hotline to the National Disaster Coordinating Council.

In Naga City, Mayor Jesse Robredo said the City Disaster Coordinating Council had kept the city's disaster response system running.

Once Pagasa raises the typhoon signal to No. 2, all the families on river banks as well as those in low-lying and landslide-prone areas are to be alerted for possible evacuation.

Both the provincial and city governments had readied heavy equipment, trucks and ambulances for disaster response operation since yesterday.

Samar provinces in full alert

The disaster coordinating councils in the three provinces of Samar Island yesterday went into full alert.

Residents in low-lying areas were asked to move to designated shelter areas, rescue teams were activated and food packages were prepared.

"We don't want to be caught flat-footed. We should always take the necessary precautionary measures before it's too late," Gov. Ben Evardone of Eastern Samar said.

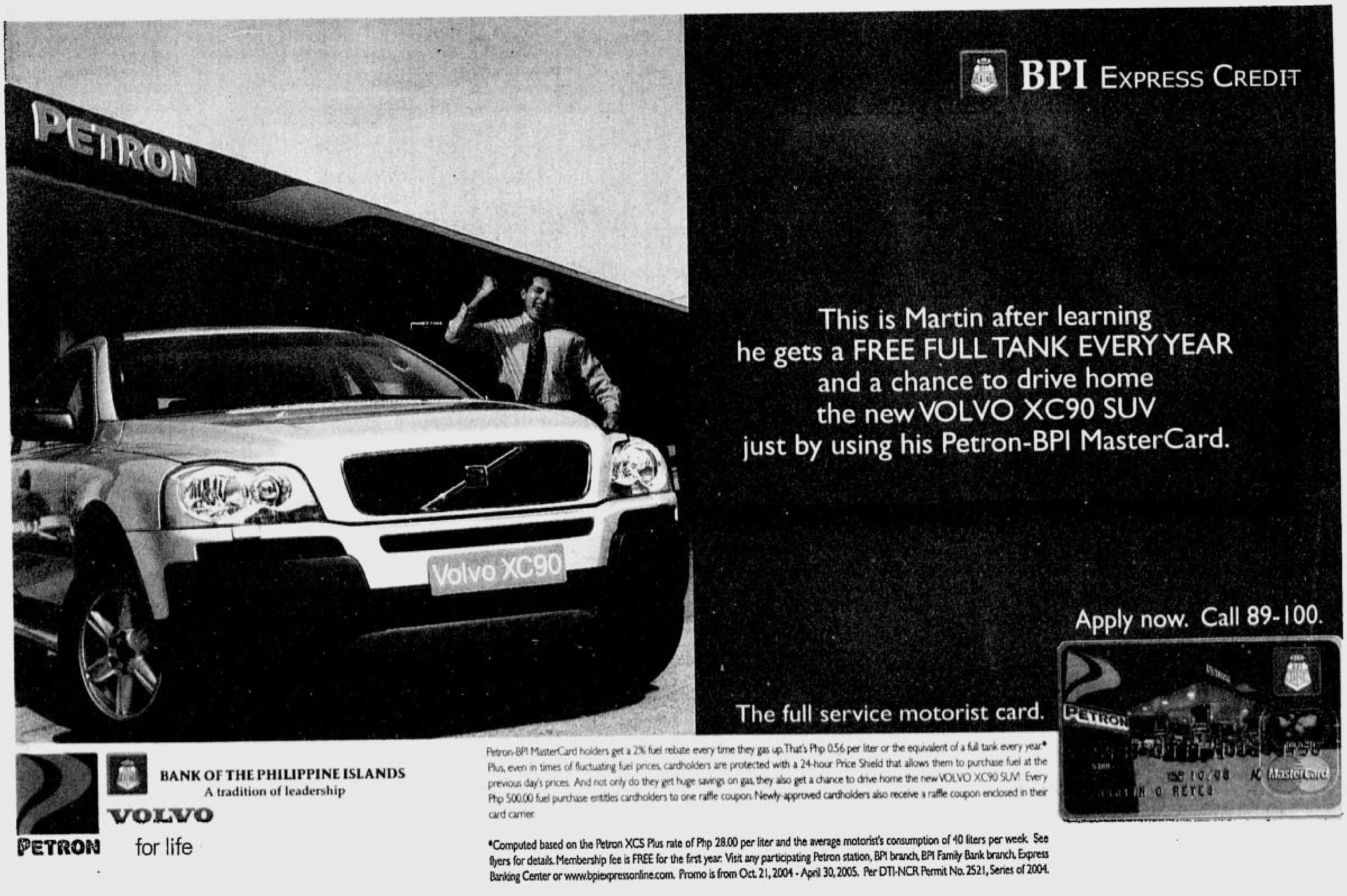
Gov. Raul Daza of Northern Samar said he had convened the disaster coordinating council of his province last Tuesday.

The towns of Oras, Dolores, Taft, Can-avid and Llorente in Eastern Samar; and Catarman, Pambujan, San Roque, Rawis and Mondragon in Northern Samar were identified by the OCD-Eastern Visayas as flood-prone areas.

Relief operations ready

Department of Social Welfare and Development-Eastern Visayas is bracing for relief operations.

Virgie Edano, operations division chief of DSWD-Eastern Visayas, said the unit's food supply was enough to feed 1,000 families. The food packs consist of rice, noodles, milk, sugar and coffee. *Reports from Norman Bordadora and Leila B. Salaverria in Manila; Juan Escandor Jr. and Gil Francis G. Arevalo, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau and Joey A. Gabieta, PDI Visayas Bureau*



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*Computed based on the Petron XCS Plus rate of Php 28.00 per liter and the average motorist's consumption of 40 liters per week. See flyers for details. Membership fee is FREE for the first year. Visit any participating Petron station, BPI branch, BPI Family Bank branch, Express Banking Center or www.bpiexpressonline.com. Promo is from Oct. 21, 2004 - April 30, 2005. Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 2521, Series of 2004.

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With the rain and floods came heroes

By Luige A. del Puerto

DISASTERS may bring death but they may also produce heroes.

Such heroes are told in two stories that took shape as floods rampaged through the town of Rodriguez (formerly Montalban) in Rizal Monday night.

In Sitio Sabah, Oliver Abad, 30, and his father Dionito, 56, left safe ground to save four neighbors being swamped by raging waters while holding onto a bamboo stalk.

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But their weight and the force of the current broke their house in two and sent them into the swirling mix of water, mud and debris.

They then struggled to keep afloat amid the wreckage of other houses on J. Bautista Street, where no structure was left standing.

Before long, the Aguilars found themselves being carried some 20 meters downstream, where Ferly was able to grab onto a bamboo tree.

Hanging to life

"It was difficult because my mother and brother could not swim," said Ferly. "They were hanging onto me."

At about the same time, Abad, who sells cooking oil for a living, was taking his parents, siblings, nephews and nieces to a safe place.

Their sanctuary was a private compound some 20 meters at the back of their house.

After prying open a small steel gate at the compound, which was on high ground, Abad ushered in his family members.

"He tried pliers first, but it would not do," said her mother, Ana. "That was our only way out because the ground there was higher. We know if we could open the gate, we would survive."

Abad was the last to enter.

But before he could step inside, he and his father heard cries for help. It was the Aguilars who were then fighting the current as they held on to a bamboo tree.

"I did not hesitate to go back," Abad recounted. "I felt no fear. I just wanted to make sure they were going to survive."

Partly wading, partly swimming through floodwater, Abad and Dionito went back to their house which was already largely submerged.

Not far from the house was the bamboo tree and the Aguilars.

Back and forth, the father-and-son tandem swam to their neighbors and fished the Aguilars out of the river one by one.

Overwhelming gratitude

"We can not thank them enough," Corazon, 52, said inside the Rodriguez gym, where she and her family were given temporary shelter.

"If not for them, we would all be dead," the mother said.

But sometimes, heroes pay a high price for their selflessness.

Roberto Quizan, 54, and his two sons, Lendo and Leo, were among those who had to make the ultimate sacrifice.

Like many other residents of Barangay Rosario, Quizan and his family had to seek the relative safety of the roof of their house to escape the rising tide of flood.

"We were on the roof, all eight of us," said Quizan's daughter, Lea, 19.

But while they may have placed themselves beyond the reach of floodwater, their effort brought them closer to another killer—electric wires that hung above their house.

After reaching the roof, the youngest son, Roberto, 12, accidentally touched a live wire.

The boy fell as thousands of volts of electricity raced through his body.

Seeing the wire beginning to entangle his son, Quizan sprang into action by grabbing and pulling it away from Roberto.

However, it was Quizan who then began to absorb the force of the electricity.

"My brother Lendo, seeing what was happening, tried to get the wire off my father, and he too got electrocuted," Lea said.

Lendro struggled with the power line and was thrown off balance.

His other brother, Leo, tried to rescue him but was met by a jolt of electricity.

Leo was thrown aback and fell into the water and drowned.

In a flash, all the adult men in the Quizan family were gone, leaving only women and children.

"My dad died saving my younger brother, and my brothers died saving my dad," Lea said, sobbing.

"I do not understand why there was still electricity at the time. It should have been shut off already... I know no one can be blamed, but shouldn't the electricity have been cut off already?" she said.

Sexually explicit ads banned from Makati roads

By Margaux C. Ortiz

A NEW ordinance would prevent nude and scantily clad models from distracting motorists and pedestrians in Makati City.

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According to the Council, the city government should approve the billboards' designs based on guidelines that ban total or partial nudity deemed objectionable, including sexually suggestive poses.

The authors of the ordinance said that while the number of billboards in the country's financial capital had been increasing, the city government did not have control over their content.

In an explanatory note, the authors said the local government lacked regulatory and police powers over the type and contents of billboards.

They added that there were no guidelines on what were allowed or prohibited.

The ordinance enumerates specific guidelines for advertising materials including banning total nudity with the display of the entire body or the entire torso, especially when certain features of the anatomy like breast, buttocks and crotch are distinctly seen.

"A nude person from a distance may be allowed, however, provided that the said anatomical features are not distinct and vividly displayed," the ordinance said.

An infant without clothes may be allowed, provided that the genitalia are not shown.

The ordinance also bans a "partially nude person" attired in filmy or transparent material that emphasizes the sex organs.

"A skimpily clad person that is excessively suggestive, as in the case of male, is also not acceptable," it stressed.

The ordinance also banned billboard ads showing a man and a woman in poses simulating sexual intercourse or suggesting intimate physical contact and scantily attired models appearing in sexually suggestive or obscene poses and facial expressions.

Manila RTC gets 7 'gifts' wrapped in black robes

By Tarra V. Quismundo

IT WAS an early Christmas gift for the country's largest regional trial court.

The Manila Regional Trial Court (RTC) has received the appointment of seven new judges to occupy its vacant salas.

"The newly assigned judges were promoted from metropolitan trial courts and regional trial courts of other provinces. They are preparing their salas," said RTC Clerk of Court Jennifer dela Cruz-Buendia.

The new Manila RTC judges are Adelina Vargas, Branch 13; Silvino Pampilo Jr., 26; Myra Fernandez, 18; Nina Antonio-Valenzuela, 28; Manuel Barrios, 54; Augusto Gutierrez, 47; and Reno Concha, 31.

Branches 13 and 31, are special drugs courts, branch 47, a special tax court, and branches 18, 26, 28 and 54, are regular courts.

For up to six years, these courts were among 14 of Manila's 56 regional trial courts that have been missing presiding judges, as their former judges had either retired or were promoted.

With the new addition, the RTC still needs eight judges. Another court, Branch 41, was recently vacated as its presiding magistrate, Rodolfo Ponferrada, was promoted to the Sandiganbayan.

With the newly appointed judges, the seven trial, courts would once again be able to receive new cases, which average around 75 a day at the Manila RTC.

The new judges are undergo ing immersion training under the Supreme Court, said Buendia.

Under this retraining, the judges would be attuned to duties and responsibilities specific to their jobs as MRTC branches.

President Macapagal-Arroyo has the exclusive power to appoint court judges and justices of the High Court.

DOJ courting new witness in Blanca case

By Dona Z. Pazzibugan

THE DEPARTMENT of Justice is eyeing a "breakthrough" in the Nida Blanca murder case.

Justice Secretary Raul Gonzales yesterday said they were wooing a woman who allegedly witnessed the murder of the actress.

Blanca was found dead on Nov. 7, 2001, at the Atlanta Center building in Greenhills, San Juan.

Gonzales said if the woman would be a real eyewitness, they could file another petition for the extradition of Blanca's husband, Rod Lauren Strunk, the principal suspect in her murder.

"I'm not giving false hopes. That's why we are now convincing the witness to testify and we would examine her testimony," Gonzales said.

"If this witness turns out to be for real, this would break open the case," he added.

He only described the woman as a "hospitality girl," or a sex worker.

He did not give other details.

Strunk left the country during the investigation.

On Nov. 13, 2003, US district court judge Gregory Hallows denied the Department of Justice's petition for Strunk's extradition.

After spending a brief time in in a detention center in Sacramento, California, Strunk was able to walk free.

Northrail folk say gov't moving slowly

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

THE RELOCATION of Malabon City families to be displaced by the Northrail Project has been delayed again and residents are not taking the blame.

Most of the affected families are ready to go but the National Housing Authority has yet to release their P50,000 disturbance compensation, Samahan ng mga Naninirahan sa Riles president Luz Loro said yesterday.

"We are just waiting for the money," she said.

Her group is willing to buy a property in Barangay Panghulo, Malabon, which the government already rejected as a relocation site.

But as the property owner and the buyers move closer to a final agreement, new problems are popping up.

The 10-hectare lot is still under mortgage. The group is also unsure if it could convince 2,000 families to avail of the property.

Owner Mario Siotchi earlier said he would sell the property only if at least 2,000 families would buy lots.

In their meeting at the City Hall yesterday, Loro said they only had about 1,400 families willing to be relocated there.

Tanjayanon Xmas reunion

THE TANJAY Association of Metro Manila is inviting Tanjayanons to its Christmas Party on Dec. 4, 6 p.m. at Barrio Fiesta on Edsa-Greenhills.

For added information, please call Jun or Rose Balbuena at 646-6138 or 0917-5207453 and Edwin "Didong" Aguilar at 822-6780.

We Filipinos never learn

ON TARGET

Ramon Tulfo

WE'LL continue to have killer floods every year so long as we don't learn to take care of our environment.

We throw non-biodegradable wastes, like discarded plastic bottles, into our canals, esteros and rivers. We mercilessly cut down trees on the mountainside to make way for farms, subdivisions and golf courses.

We never learn from our bitter experience. Yearly, we suffer a heavy death toll because Mother Nature gets back at us for abusing her.

Nature's heaviest revenge on us, so far, was in Ormoc City in 1991 when flash floods came down from the bald mountains, drowning 4,000 people.

There must be something wrong with us as a people.

Who was that American writer who said we have a damaged culture? His words hurt, but he's probably right.

***

And now, the Senate is going to conduct an investigation—again, in aid of legislation—on why killer floods occur every year?

C'mon, guys, cut the crap. You know the people behind illegal logging. They are engaged in it because you, the politicians, protect them with your indifference.

You know that most forest rangers are crooks; they look the other way when trees in the forests are cut down unnecessarily because they've been bribed.

I used to have a friend who's a forest ranger. He once unashamedly told me they allowed the cutting down of trees in the forests as long as there was "SOP."

Marines who seized illegal logs in Quezon province several years ago were disheartened after they learned that some rich and powerful personalities interceded for the release of their catch.

Huwag na tayong maglokohan, mga kagalang-galang na senador!

***

At 2 p.m. today, INQUIRER publisher Gani Yambot, editor in chief Letty Jimenez-Magsanoc and myself will be arraigned at the Makati Regional Trial Court for libel.

Our accuser is Fousi Ali Bondagjy, an Arab who was allegedly involved in illegal job recruitment.

It was on the issue of illegal recruitment that I wrote about him a couple of years ago. He's gotten back not only at me but also my bosses at the INQUIRER.

At the risk of incurring the ire of the judge who will hear our case, please allow me to say this: Shall we allow a foreigner to oppress our own people and gag the press for exposing his shenanigan?

God save this country!

***

Former presidential publicist Dante Ang, the newly appointed chair of the Commission on Overseas Filipinos, is fit for the job.

Ang, owner of The Manila Times and The Manila Times School of Journalism, knows the overseas job market like the palm of his hand.

For a long time, Ang was consultant for then Labor Minister Blas Ople on overseas job recruitment during the martial law years.

He produced the popular TV commercial in the 1980's which portrayed a Filipino overseas worker crying behind prison bars, shouting: "Ibalik n'yo ako sa Pilipinas!." It became a rallying point for illegal Filipino overseas workers who were conned by unscrupulous recruiters.

Ang published and edited the now defunct Jobs Today, the bible of overseas job-seekers for years.

He publishes Diwaliwan, a monthly magazine for Filipino domestics in Hong Kong.

Ang has a trading company in Rome. Hundreds of thousands of Filipinos work in Italy.

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Editor Ester G. Dipasupil ■ *Assistant Editor* Cenon B. Bibe

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The ordinance also bans a "partially nude person" attired in filmy or transparent material that emphasizes the sex organs.

"A skimpily clad person that is excessively suggestive, as in the case of male, is also not acceptable," it stressed.

The ordinance also banned billboard ads showing a man and a woman in poses simulating sexual intercourse or suggesting intimate physical contact and scantily attired models appearing in sexually suggestive or obscene poses and facial expressions.

Manila RTC gets 7 'gifts' wrapped in black robes

By Tarra V. Quismundo

IT WAS an early Christmas gift for the country's largest regional trial court.

The Manila Regional Trial Court (RTC) has received the appointment of seven new judges to occupy its vacant salas.

"The newly assigned judges were promoted from metropolitan trial courts and regional trial courts of other provinces. They are preparing their salas," said RTC Clerk of Court Jennifer dela Cruz-Buendia.

The new Manila RTC judges are Adelina Vargas, Branch 13; Silvino Pampilo Jr., 26; Myra Fernandez, 18; Nina Antonio-Valenzuela, 28; Manuel Barrios, 54; Augusto Gutierrez, 47; and Reno Concha, 31.

Branches 13 and 31, are special drugs courts, branch 47, a special tax court, and branches 18, 26, 28 and 54, are regular courts.

For up to six years, these courts were among 14 of Manila's 56 regional trial courts that have been missing presiding judges, as their former judges had either retired or were promoted.

With the new addition, the RTC still needs eight judges. Another court, Branch 41, was recently vacated as its presiding magistrate, Rodolfo Ponferrada, was promoted to the Sandiganbayan.

With the newly appointed judges, the seven trial courts would once again be able to receive new cases, which average around 75 a day at the Manila RTC.

The new judges are undergoing immersion training under the Supreme Court, said Buendia.

Under this retraining, the judges would be attuned to duties and responsibilities specific to their jobs as MRTC branches.

President Macapagal-Arroyo has the exclusive power to appoint court judges and justices of the High Court.

DOJ courting new witness in Blanca case

By Dona Z. Pazzibugan

THE DEPARTMENT of Justice is eyeirg a "breakthrough" in the NidaBlanca murder case.

Jutice Secretary Raul Gonzales yesterday said they were wooing a woman who allegedly witnessed the murder of the actress.

Blance was found dead on Nov. 7, 2001, at the Atlanta Center building in Greenhills, San Juan.

Gonzales said if the woman would be a real eyewitness, they could file another petition for the extradition of Blanca's husband, Rod Lauren Strunk, the principal suspect in her murder.

"I'm not giving false hopes. That's why we are now convincing the witness to testify and we would examine her testimony," Gonzales said.

"If this witness turns out to be for real, this would break open the case," he added.

He only described the woman as a "hospitality girl," or a sex worker.

He did not give other details.

Strunk left the country during the investigation.

On Nov. 13, 2003, US district court judge Gregory Hallows denied the Department of Justice's petition for Strunk's extradition.

After spending a brief time in in a detention center in Sacramento, California, Strunk was able to walk free.

Northrail folk say gov't moving slowly

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

THE RELOCATION of Malabon City families to be displaced by the Northrail Project has been delayed again and residents are not taking the blame.

Most of the affected families are ready to go but the National Housing Authority has yet to release their P50,000 disturbance compensation, Samahan ng mga Naninirahan sa Riles president Luz Loro said yesterday.

"We are just waiting for the money," she said.

Her group is willing to buy a property in Barangay Panghulo, Malabon, which the government already rejected as a relocation site.

But as the property owner and the buyers move closer to a final agreement, new problems are popping up.

The 10-hectare lot is still under mortgage. The group is also unsure if it could convince 2,000 families to avail of the property.

Owner Mario Siotchi earlier said he would sell the property only if at least 2,000 families would buy lots.

In their meeting at the City Hall yesterday, Loro said they only had about 1,400 families willing to be relocated there.

Tanjayanon Xmas reunion

THE TANJAY Association of Metro Manila is inviting Tanjayanons to its Christmas Party on Dec. 4, 6 p.m. at Barrio Fiesta on Edsa-Greenhills.

For added information, please call Jun or Rose Balbuena at 646-6138 or 0917-5207453 and Edwin "Didong" Aguilar at 822-6780.

We Filipinos never learn

ON TARGET

Ramon Tulfo

WE'LL continue to have killer floods every year so long as we don't learn to take care of our environment.

We throw non-biodegradable wastes, like discarded plastic bottles, into our canals, esteros and rivers. We mercilessly cut down trees on the mountainside to make way for farms, subdivisions and golf courses.

We never learn from our bitter experience. Yearly, we suffer a heavy death toll because Mother Nature gets back at us for abusing her.

Nature's heaviest revenge on us, so far, was in Ormoc City in 1991 when flash floods came down from the bald mountains, drowning 4,000 people.

There must be something wrong with us as a people.

Who was that American writer who said we have a damaged culture? His words hurt, but he's probably right.

***

And now, the Senate is going to conduct an investigation—again, in aid of legislation—on why killer floods occur every year?

C'mon, guys, cut the crap. You know the people behind illegal logging. They are engaged in it because you, the politicians, protect them with your indifference.

You know that most forest rangers are crooks; they look the other way when trees in the forests are cut down unnecessarily because they've been bribed.

I used to have a friend who's a forest ranger. He once unashamedly told me they allowed the cutting down of trees in the forests as long as there was "SOP."

Marines who seized illegal logs in Quezon province several years ago were disheartened after they learned that some rich and powerful personalities interceded for the release of their catch.

Huwag na tayong maglokohan, mga kagalang-galang na senador!

***

At 2 p.m. today, INQUIRER publisher Gani Yambot, editor in chief Letty Jimenez-Magsanoc and myself will be arraigned at the Makati Regional Trial Court for libel.

Our accuser is Fousi Ali Bondagjy, an Arab who was allegedly involved in illegal job recruitment.

It was on the issue of illegal recruitment that I wrote about him a couple of years ago. He's gotten back not only at me but also my bosses at the INQUIRER.

At the risk of incurring the ire of the judge who will hear our case, please allow me to say this: Shall we allow a foreigner to oppress our own people and gag the press for exposing his shenanigan?

God save this country!

***

Former presidential publicist Dante Ang, the newly appointed chair of the Commission on Overseas Filipinos, is fit for the job.

Ang, owner of The Manila Times and The Manila Times School of Journalism, knows the overseas job market like the palm of his hand.

For a long time, Ang was consultant for then Labor Minister Blas Ople on overseas job recruitment during the martial law years.

He produced the popular TV commercial in the 1980's which portrayed a Filipino overseas worker crying behind prison bars, shouting: "Ibalik n'yo ako sa Pilipinas!." It became a rallying point for illegal Filipino overseas workers who were conned by unscrupulous recruiters.

Ang published and edited the now defunct Jobs Today, the bible of overseas job-seekers for years.

He publishes Diwaliwan, a monthly magazine for Filipino domestics in Hong Kong.

Ang has a trading company in Rome. Hundreds of thousands of Filipinos work in Italy.

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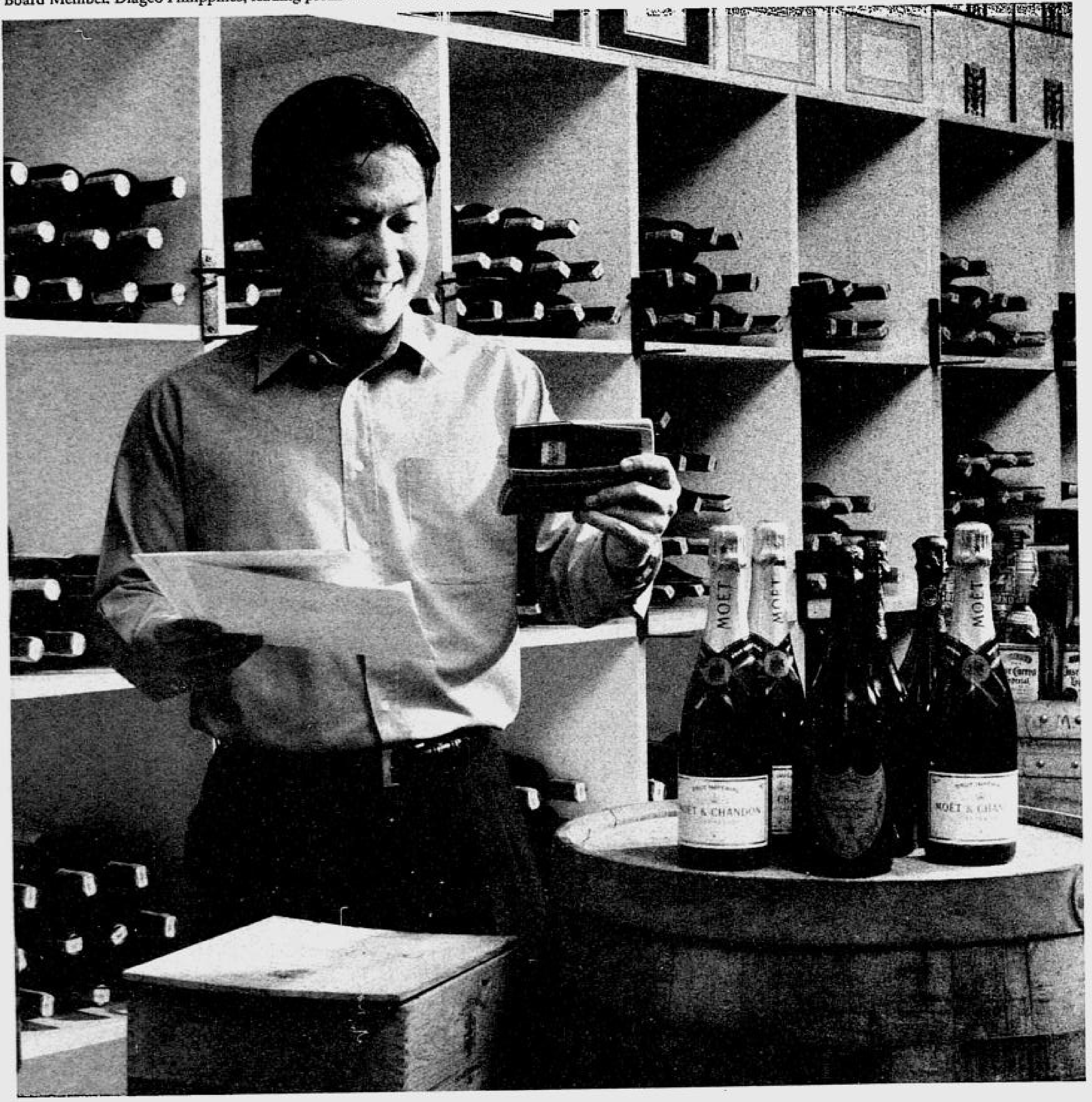

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Editor Teddyvic S. Melendres

SPORTS TV

Compiled by L. Manguiat

BASKETBALL: US NCAA—Wake Forest vs Illinois; 8 a.m. (r-4 p.m.); North Carolina vs Indiana; 10 a.m. (r-6 p.m.); ESPN—The ACC's Demon Deacons take on the Big Ten's Fighting Illini while the title-favorite Tar Heels square off against the Hoosiers.

NBA—Sixers vs Spurs; 9:30 a.m. (r-9 p.m.); Solar Sports—Philadelphia travels to Texas to play San Antonio.

FOOTBALL: Uefa Champions League; 5 p.m.; Star Sports—German squad SV Werder Bremen collides with Italian power Inter Milan.

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in the
Entertainment section
Happy Viewing!

Shell rallies to nip Alaska

By June Navarro

TONY Dela Cruz bounced back from a dismal performance to help Shell post a come-from-behind 89-85 victory over Alaska in the Gran Matador PBA Philippine Cup last night at the Araneta Coliseum.

Dela Cruz, who missed a couple of shots that could have altered the fate of the Turbochargers in a losing endeavor against the Purefoods TJ Hotdogs, came through with the decisive baskets this time to allow Shell overhaul a 16-point deficit.

"As the top scorer of the team, I told him (Dela Cruz) that he would always encounter the pressure of making the crucial shots just like what happened against Purefoods," said Shell coach Leo Austria, whose Turbochargers are seeking one of two outright seats to the quarterfinals.

Smarting from an 84-79 loss to the TJ Hotdogs, the Turbochargers zoomed back on the winning track and chalked up their ninth victory in 14 games, half a game behind the Barangay Ginebra Kings (9-4).

Dela Cruz pumped in 12 of his team-high 24 points in the third and drilled in a go-ahead jumper that gave the Tur-

SHELL/ A26

GAME TODAY
(*La Salle Sentrum, Lipa City, Batangas*)
6 p.m.—Purefoods vs Coca-Cola
GAMES TOMORROW (*Philsports Arena*)
4:30 p.m.—Red Bull vs Sta. Lucia Realty
7:20 p.m.—San Miguel Beer
vs Barangay Ginebra

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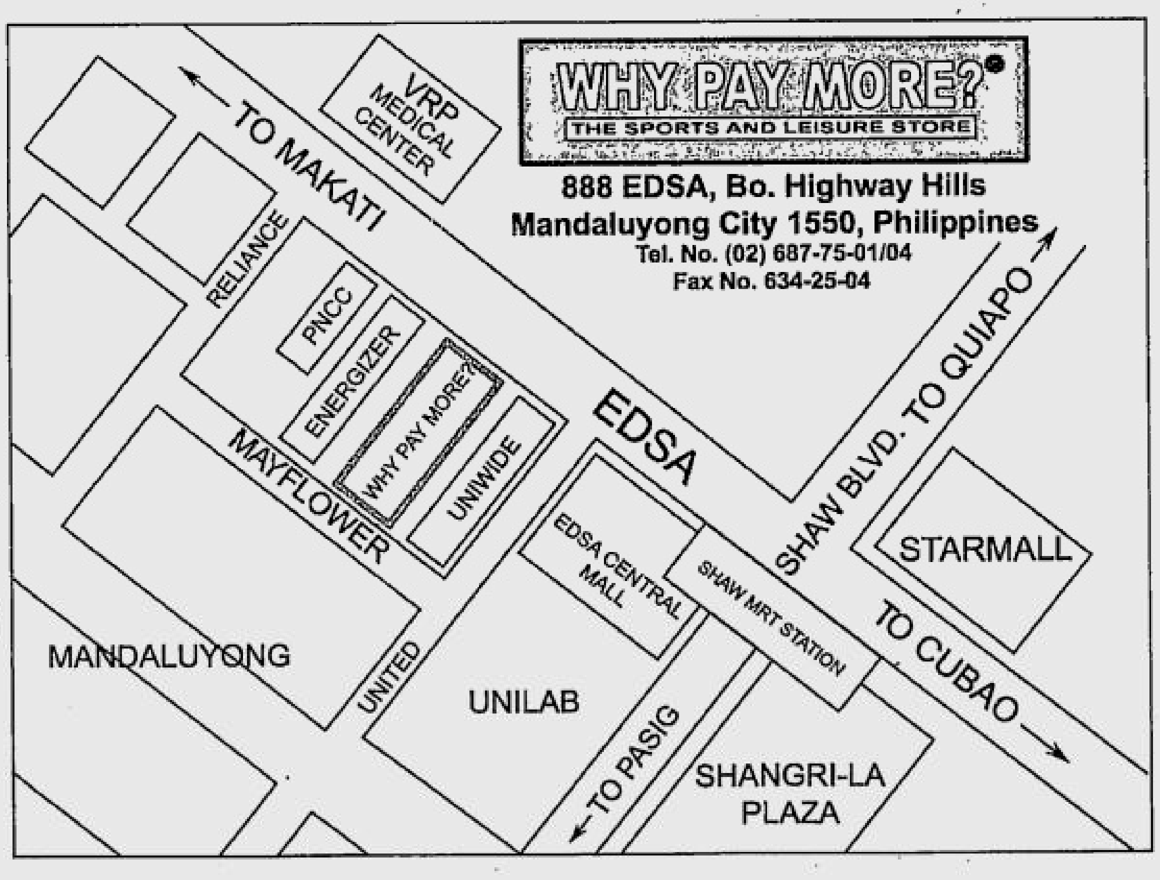

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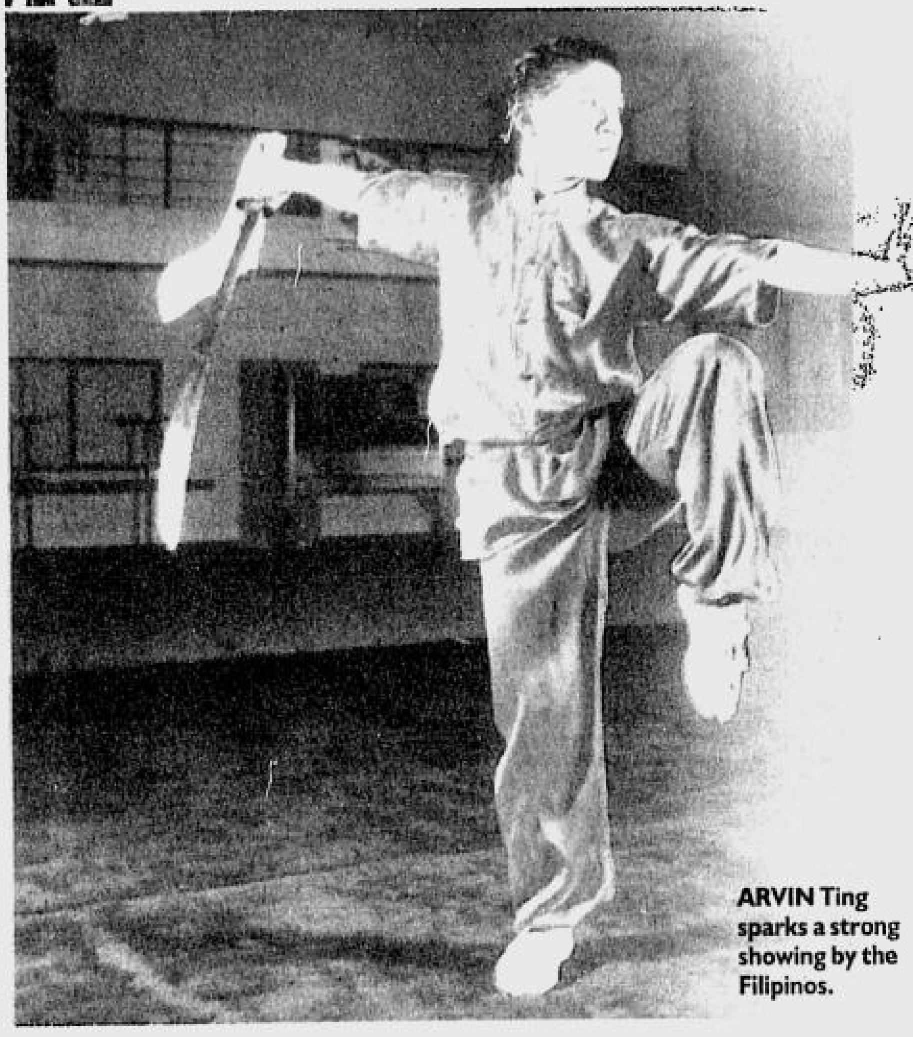


ARVIN Ting sparks a strong showing by the Filipinos.

FOUR MEDALS

Ting shines for RP in Asian wushu tilt

YONGON, Myanmar—The Philippine wushu team maintained its reputation as an international powerhouse in the sport recently by winning three golds, five silvers and four bronzes in the 6th Asian wushu championship here.

World champion Arvin Ting sparked the Filipinos' spectacular showing by bagging four medals, including two golds, in the taolu (form) competition.

Another world titlist, Rene Catalan, produced the other RP gold in the 48-kilogram category of the sanshou (full contact) division.

Ting scored 9.38 points and 27.89 points in the men's cudgeland and men's all-around respectively, while Catalan outfought Hong Kong's Pibool Khunkazu in the finals.

The Filipinos, whose participation was supported by the Philippine Sports Commission and the First Gentleman Foundation, have performed well in various international events since they made their debut in the 1991 Manila SEAG.

Ting tallied 9.30 points to grab the silver in men's changquan.

The other silver winners were Vietnam Southeast Asian Games champions Rexel Nganhayna and Edward Folayang, and Jennifer Lagilag and Mary Jane Estimar.

Nganhayna and Estimar competed in the 56-kg categories, Lagilag in the 45-kg and Folayang in the 70-kg, where they all lost to their respective Chinese rivals in the finals.

Ting got his first medal, a bronze, in men's broadsword, where he submitted a score of 9.28 points. Vietnam SEAG gold medalist Willie Wang, Eduardo Sevilla and Rhea May Refari also won a bronze each in taolu's men's sword and men's taijiquan and sanshou's 52-kg, respectively.

"We could have won more golds, but the Chinese proved too tough to hurdle," said Wushu Federation of the Philippines honorary lifetime president and Asia Wushu Federation executive committee vice president Francis Chan, who helped the team's campaign here.

WPF president and newly elected Philippine Olympic Committee treasurer Julian Camacho was elected head of the Southeast Asian Wushu Federation during its congress here.

Montaña, Granny Goose tackle rivals as semis chase tightens

STANDINGS	W	L
Granny Goose	6	2
Montaña	6	2
Magnolia-FEU	6	3
Welcoat	4	4
Toyota Otis-Letran	4	5
AMP-Ateneo	3	5
ICTSI-La Salle	3	6
Air Philippines	2	7

GAMES TODAY (*Ateneo Gym*)
2 p.m.—Air Philippines vs Montaña
4 p.m.—AMP-Ateneo vs G. Goose

THE CHASE for the two outright semifinals berth tightens in the PBL Open Championship.

With three teams closely battling for the top slots, Granny Goose and Montaña Pawnshop will try to keep their share of the lead when they face separate foes today at the Blue Eagle Gym, Ateneo.

"Every game for us is important so we have to play harder and smarter each game," said coach Robert Sison, whose Jewels clash with lowly Air Philippines at 2 p.m.

Granny Goose, reeling from an upset loss to ITCSI-La Salle, also remains cautious when it squares off with AMP-Ateneo at 4 p.m.

The Tortillos' fluid offense was absent when the Green Archers halted their five-game winning run, 82-71, last Saturday. But the league newcomers will try to spark another winning run in the Eagles' homecourt.

The Jewels, who are coming off a 93-80 triumph over Welcoat, will also aim for a second straight win.

Air Philippines, meanwhile, must recover from its seven-game slide to avoid being one of the last two teams to be cut at the end of the eliminations.

In their first round encounters, Granny Goose nipped AMP-Ateneo, 70-64, while Montaña repulsed Air Philippines, 74-66.

Jasmine W. Payo

Iloilo, Davao booters prevail

DEFENDING champion Iloilo flexed its muscles in the opener of the 2004 PFF/Adidas Under-19 Championship with a 4-1 thrashing of Iligan at the University Of San Carlos pitch in Talamba, Cebu City, yesterday.

It was complete domination by the Ilonggos, who drew the goals from striker Relan Bretana in the 28th minute, Ruben Doctora in the 33rd, Jovin Bedic 59th and Francis Gustilo 80th minute of the Group B tussle.

Iligan striker Jay Britner Actub scored the lone marker for his team in the 63rd minute.

In Group A action, Davao beat Dipolog, 2-0, behind striker Andy Estimo, who broke through Dipolog's defense in the 6th and 13th minutes.

Both squads went at each other for the remainder of the match, but the teeners from Dipolog were unable to recover.

In the other Group A contest, host Cebu and Baguio battled to a thrilling 2-2 draw. The Cebuanos jumped to a 2-0 lead behind Junard Aguilar in the 5th minute and Julius Acre in the 41st minute, but the Baguio lads came back strong with two goals by Alexis Sobremonte—in the 45th minute and the 82nd minute.

Favorite National Capital Region and Masbate were playing at press time.

The event, organized by the Cebu Football Association, is the official Under-19 tournament of the Philippine Football Federation.

PFF deputy secretary general Domeka Garamendi said Adidas is also sponsoring a 'writers and photographers' competition for the tournament.

Red Ribbon: CSA stuns Cheng Hua

THE COLEGIO San Agustin/Hed Center/Claret School selection assembled by coach Sugar Guttieres stunned Cheng Hua, 3-0, Monday and grabbed the top position in Group C of the Red Ribbon Football Fiesta.

The CSA selection dominated the 60-minute contest with goals by Reginald Gomez on the 25th minute, Paolo Casambre 31st and Marcelino Wilson 42nd.

At home with the Colegio San Agustin pitch in Dasmariñas Village, Makati, the CSA Selection remains the favorite among the 13 teams vying for this year's top U-14 trophy.

La Salle Greenhills beat Don Bosco Makati, 2-0, to claim its first victory in the tournament. La Sallians Juan Gabriel Santos and Ian Garcia scored on the 49th and 53rd minute, respectively.

Southridge School and Xavier lead Group A, while Ateneo and Marist School share the top spot in Group B.

Meanwhile, Ed Formoso, the Football Fiesta's event manager announced that 30 'Under-14' teams are expected to compete in the year-ending, single-day 2004 PFF/Red Ribbon Football Festival happening at the Ateneo pitch on Dec. 19.

Javier powers Sudac to archery title

MARK Javier capped a successful campaign in the 1st Ramon A. Lim Memorial Cup national target indoor archery championships Tuesday by leading Sudac (Silliman University Dumaguete Archery Club) to the men's team title at the Ninoy Aquino Stadium.

Javier, who claimed the national men's indoor crown Monday, joined hands with Edrian Sanchez, Gerald Laguardia and Neil Divinagracia to score 246 points and beat Lord Maiden's Aaron Nikon dela Cruz, Florante Matan and Syd Nerickzon Fraginal (234) in the finals.

Carlos P. Garcia High swept the boys' and girls' standard titles.

Roilan Peñaflor, Jairo Vidal and Mac Pernis combined for 192 points to rout Makiling National High's Jovie Bermas, Ram Zotomayor, Jelson Enciso and Arnel Cambronero (160) in the boys' finals while Grace Dolfo, Marie Cabral and Ronalyn Alvarez tallied 177 to whip Makiling's Roma Asuncion, Charis Vivas, Ma. Michelle Romero and Janet Bermas (96) in the girls division.

University of Cordilleras and Ramon Magsaysay High finished third in the boys' and girls' groups, respectively.

Outgoing Philippine Olympic Committee president Celso L. Dayrit graced the closing ceremony of the event supported by the Philippine Sports Commission and the First Gentleman Foundation. Dayrit said he had proposed the inclusion of compound bow division events in the 2005 SEAG here.

TIERRO

Tierro now RP's No. 1 Cup player

NEW DELHI, India—Patrick John Tierro of the Philippines ousted Austria's Andreas Fasching, 6-3, 7-6, but lost his second round match to another Austrian Konstantin Gruber, 4-6, 2-6, in the $25,000 ITF men's Satellite Masters Tuesday here.

The 6-foot-1 Tierro finished 14th in the overall standings after accumulating 13.5 circuit points in four ITF Satellite legs.

Virgilio 'Beeyong' Sison, Tierro's coach-trainer at the Subic Bay International Tennis Center, said his ward is now the lone Filipino netter to gain an ATP ranking.

"PJ's 13.5 circuit points translates to four ATP points," explained Sison.

The result meant that Tierro is now the country's top Davis Cup player, replacing longtime Filipino No. 1 one Johnny Arcilla.

SPORTSWATCH

Antonio-led Tagaytay routs Cavite City

TAGAYTAY CITY—Grandmaster Rogelio "Joey" Antonio Jr. beat Roberto Grepo in 22 moves of a French Defense to power top seed Tagaytay City to a 3.5-0.5 victory over Cavite City in the opening round of the 2004 National Inter-Cities and Municipalities Chess Team Championships Wednesday at the Tagaytay Sports Center here. IM Richard Bitoon and 11-year-old Wesley So also won while Mar Anthony Santos salvaged a draw with Edmundo Gatus to prevent a Cavite shutout. Cantillan City (Surigao Del Sur) posted a similar 3.5-0.5 victory over the RP Asian Youth Team and so did Tanauan City (Batangas) over San Fernando, Pampanga. *NM Marlon Bernardino*

Holy Angel to defend NAASCU titles

THE FOURTH National Athletic Association of Schools, Colleges and Universities (NAASCU) volleyball competitions kick off on Saturday, Dec. 4 , with defending champion Holy Angel University leading the pack at the AMA Computer University gym in Quezon City. Holy Angel will defend the titles in both the men's and women's divisions. The other participating teams are University of Makati, St. Clare College (Caloocan), AMA Computer University, New Era University and STI College. "We expect this year's volleyball competition to be as exciting as the previous years," said NAASCU president Dr. Ernesto Jay Adalem of St. Clare.

Admirals survive Jaguars in NCRAA

DASMARIÑAS, Cavite—The Philippine Maritime Institute Admirals exploited mismatches in the shaded lane and stunned the Philippine School of Business Administration Jaguars, 80-75, in the 12th National Capital Region Athletic Association (NCRAA) men's basketball tournament at the La Salle-Dasmariñas gym. The victory, a follow-up of PMI's 95-88 double overtime triumph over PATTS School of Aeronautics, hiked the Admirals' record to 2-2 in Group B. In women's action, Rosemarie de Guzman chipped in 19 points for La Salle-Dasmariñas as it turned back St. Benedict's College, 50-44. The Dasmariñas Lady Patriots notched their first win in three games.

Patafa sanctions Journal Fun Run

THE PHILIPPINE Amateur Track and Field Association has sanctioned the 1st Women's Journal Open Christmas Ladies Fun Run. In a letter to the fun run's producer Green Bucks Entertainment Productions, Patafa president Go Teng Kok thanked the organizers for supporting road racing. The fun run is open to all ladies aged 17 to 45. The event will be held on Dec. 12 on Roxas Boulevard in Manila starting at 6 a.m. For registration, contestants can go to the office of Women's Journal Publisher and project director Nemesio Antonio Jr., on the second floor of the Journal Building, 19th corner Railroad Streets, Port Area, Manila. Tels. 527-84-21 local 337 and 328.

Atienza to grace awarding ceremonies

ALI Atienza will grace the awarding ceremonies of the 2004 Milo Little Olympics-NCR today at 2 p.m. at the Century Park Hotel. Among the high school MOA awardees are Raul Santos of Sisters of Mary School (athletics); Paul Jefferson Vivas of Marcelo H. Del Pilar NHS (badminton); Mark Bryan Ceriola of La Immaculada Concepcion School (chess); Kevin Dwight Sendino of San Beda College (football); Harriet Mauricio (gymnastics); Marvin Serito of San Beda College (tennis); Allen Paule of Sta. Cruz Academy-Pampanga (sepak); and Marvie Borja of Canossa College (swimming).

2-Cock Super Ulutan slated Dec. 9

A GUARANTEED prize of P300,000 is up for grabs in the "2-Cock Super Ulutan" on Dec. 9 at Sta. Ana Cockpit (AP Reyes Avenue, Makati City), with well-known promoters Kags Paliza and Aba Badiola as hosts. Awaiting the first five champions are the following prizes: first, P25,000 plus additional prizes for handler and gaffer; second, P17,000; third, P15,000; fourth, P10,000 and fifth, P10,000. A total of P100,000 will be divided among the next champions. For inquiries, call 898-3474 and 898-3475 or 0921-5191962 (Aba) and 0918-9251121.

Derby stakes P2 million, 3-door Pajero

THE FIGHT for a P2 million guaranteed prize, an imported 3-door Pajero and cocking honors begins today when the "Incredibol Na, Apordabol Pa 5-Cock Derby" opens at Roligon Mega Cockpit starting at 4 p.m. Hosted by Rolly Ligon and presented by Thundebird Power Feeds, the derby kicks of with 2-cock eliminations. The qualifying heat continues on Dec. 4 & 6, after which the 3-cock championship takes center stage on the 8th. For inquiries, call 833-2275/833-1638 or at 0920-3074225 and look for Shirley, Aubrey or Tiling.

Sportswriter's father dies, 63

HERMOGENES Joble, father of People's Tonight sportswriter Rey Joble, died Monday morning, (Nov. 29) after a long bout with sclerosis of the liver. He was 63 years old. His remains lie at 267 Bgy.Bungahan, Batangas. Interment will be on Sunday, Dec. 5 at St. Basil Memorial Garden in Cuenca, Batangas. Joble is survived by his children Maribel and Dante, Teresa and Alejandro, Herman and Jocelyn, Milanelle and Eric, Pauline and Raul, Hermogenes Jr., and Rizza, and Rey and Annabel.

Shell rallies to nip Alaska

From page A25

bochargers a taste of the lead, 81-79, after falling behind by as many as 16 points in the first half.

Another Dela Cruz floater on the left flank made it 86-83, as Brandon Cablay and Reynel Hugnatan committed miscues that sent the Aces plunging to their ninth defeat in 14 games.

Austria also praised Chris Jackson, whose defense and hustle forced plenty of the Aces' 20 turnovers as against Shell's 10 miscues. The Turbochargers issued a conference-high 26 assists.

In the second game, FedEx defeated San Miguel, 106-90, to snap a five-game losing streak.

The Express, who climbed to 5-8, dealt San Miguel a second straight loss. The Beermen fell to 6-7.

Meanwhile, reports from the Las Vegas Metropolitan Department revealed that its homicide division is hunting down former Ginebra player Rudy Distrito, who is allegedly wanted for killing a 24-year-old Asian male.

The report, filed by Sgt. Mike Thompson, tagged Distrito, a 5-foot-10 shooting guard known for his rugged plays, in the killing after witnesses saw him fleeing the scene of the crime in Las Vegas.

The victim, whom police did not identify, died of numerous stab wounds at the UMC trauma unit.

The scores:

First Game

SHELL 89—Dela Cruz 24, Tubid 15, Alvarez 9, Bajar 9, Mamaril 8, Cruz 6, Jackson 6, Legaspi 5, Calagulo 4, Ferreria 2, Sta. Maria 1.

ALASKA 85—Cariaso 29, Allado 19, Cablay 14, Hugnatan 13, Hawkins 9, tejada 3, Duat 2, Thoss 0, Johnson 0, Padilla 0.

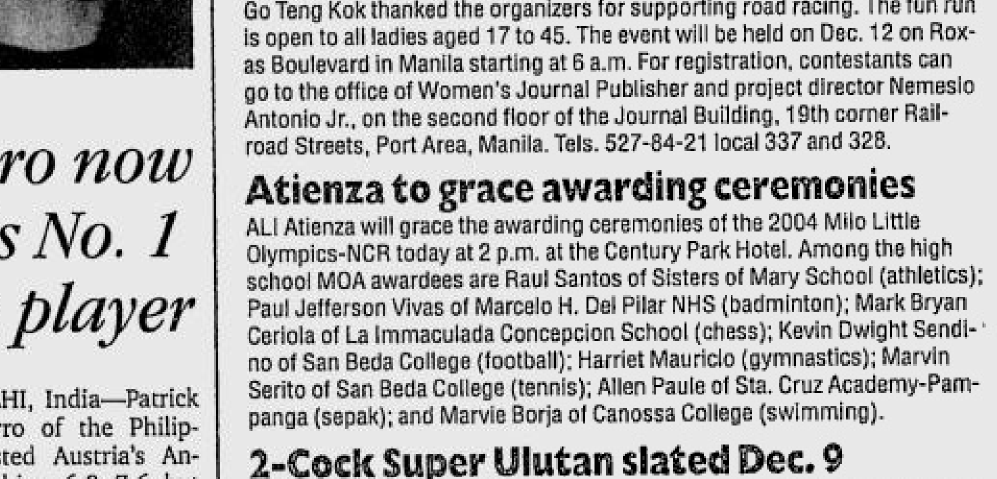
Quarters: 18-30, 43-53, 64-68, 88-85.

Second game

FEDEX 106—Ritualo 19, Ferriols 17, Yap 14, De Ocampo 9, Se 9, Arboleda 9, Gonzales 8, Sison 8, Codiñera 8, Billones 5, Ejercito 3.

SAN MIGUEL 90—Seigle 21, Belasco 15, Racela 11, Hontiveros 11, Peña 11, Ildefonso 10, Mente 7, Singson 2, Villoria 2, Castro 0, Gamboa 0.

Quarters: 27-29, 51-51, 83-70, 106-90.



LADY CAR RACER: Youthful lady car racer Kathy Maningding (inset) grabbed the limelight in the Novice Stock and Clubman divisions on impressive times in the 11th leg of the RMSC Slalom Grand Prix recently at SM Southmall. Maningding of Explorer Motorworks Racing Team had several bridesmaid finishes in previous races.

Roach to Manny: Focus on 3K first

FORGET about Marco Antonio Barrera, focus on Fahsan 3K Battery first.

American trainer Freddie Roach said Filipino boxing hero Manny Pacquiao's priority should be his Dec. 11 showdown against Fahsan, whom Roach described as "this tough, durable Thai boxer who is bound to go all out to beat Manny."

The 2003 Trainer of the Year earlier challenged Barrera to take on Pacquiao in February after Barrera claimed once again that he was distracted and not at his best in their Nov. 15 battle last year in San Antonio, Texas, where Barrera suffered a devastating 11th round knockout.

Roach said he didn't think Barrera was afraid of Pacquiao but had declined the rematch offer from international promoter Murad Muhammad because "he (Barrera) wants a lot of money."

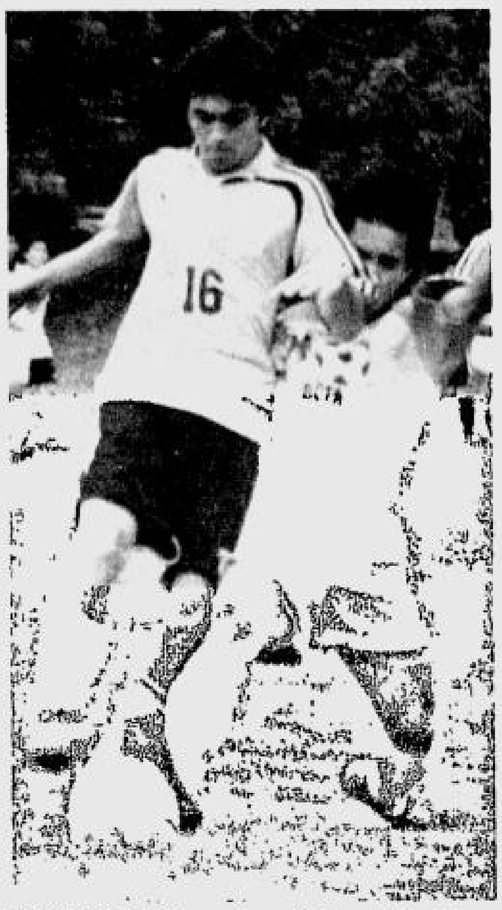
Roach balked at the idea of Barrera's camp that Pacquiao first take on WBC super bantamweight champion Oscar Larios before even thinking of a Barrera rematch.

Roach said he had spoken to Larios' trainer Jose Reynoso who said "Oscar (Larios) will never fight Pacquiao" because there was no way he could match the speed or the power of Pacquiao especially if Larios had to move up to 126 pounds.

Pacquiao, Roach and personal trainers Buboy Fernandez and Nonoy Neri are scheduled to arrive in Manila from Davao while Murad Muhammad will plane in from Los Angeles tomorrow.

Fahsan 3K Battery, together with manager Jimmy Chaichotchaung, will arrive on Monday with KO specialist Chaiyong Distar, who has 11 KOs in 12 wins and two defeats.

Distar faces RP and Orient Pacific Boxing Federation No.1-ranked super flyweight Z Gorres in the "Yanig sa Taguig" sponsored by Smart, Talk 'N Text, PLDT and Solar Sports with the support of Taguig Mayor Freddie Tinga. *Salven Lagumbay*



FEVER PITCH: Teams from Cebu and Baguio literally kicked off the National Adidas under-19 football tilt at the University of San Carlos. See *story on A26.*
ALLAN DEFENSOR/CEBU DAILY NEWS

Tigresses gun for lead share

DEFENDING champion University of Santo Tomas tries to catch up with fancied Philippine Sports Commission atop the heap as it takes on San Sebastian College today in the Shakey's V-League second conference at the Ninoy Aquino Stadium.

Riding the crest of a 25-21, 29-31, 25-21, 25-19 victory over back-to-back UAAP titlist La Salle in Sunday's opener at the Philsports Arena, the Tigresses (1-0) shoot for a follow-up against the Lady Stags (0-1) at 3 p.m. in this event sponsored by Shakey's Pizza.

Admission is free with the first game to be telecast live on Channel 13 at 3 p.m. The second game will be aired tomorrow.

UST, which is tied with Letran at 1-0, will lean on its vaunted power hitters, led by national team mainstay and alumna Roxanne Pimentel.

San Sebastian rammed into a powerful PSC (2-0) squad and dropped a 22-25, 15-25, 20-25 decision, also last Sunday, despite drawing a 17-point performance from import Jennifer Bohawe, who led the school to several NCAA and beach volley titles in the late '90s.

UST coach August Sta. Maria knows only too well of San Sebastian's power and its ability to turn things around although he remains confident of his wards' chances.

"They're a tall team and they really hit hard, let's see what happens," said Sta. Maria, who is also expected to get some key contributions from Mary Jean Balse and Kate Co Yu Kang, the MVP and Best Receiver in the first conference, respectively, import Rubie de Leon and Venus Bernal.

Also expected to draw some of the attention in the event co-presented by Dunkin Donuts, HOBC Home of Beauty Exclusives, Smart and PLDT with Mikasa and Accel as official volleyball and outfitter, ,respectively, is the 5 p.m. duel pitting La Salle (0-1) against Lyceum (0-1).

Criterium Race wraps up Sunday

THE CYCLING Search Invitational Criterium Race presented by Pagcor wraps up its three-leg circuit this Sunday in faraway Vigan, confident of producing new talents that could challenge the pros in top-level races.

Team Excellent's Joel Balucos and Team Jazy's 1-2 punch of Adrian Malanum and Jazy Garcia have emerged the men to watch in the elite category after taking the top three places heading into the final leg of the event.

Balucos, 25, is showing the way in the points race with 26, including a 15-point effort in the second leg in Tarlac City last week.

The Jazy teammates are expected to make life miserable for Balucos in the Vigan criterium, a 48-kilometer, 15-lap race of the event organized by Treo Sales and Management Corp.

The fight for team honors in the event backed by the cities of Manila, Tarlac and Vigan, Rudy Project, Tarlac Electric Co., Partas Transport, Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office, Philpost, UCPB Gen., Masco, WOW Phils., TCL, Philcycling and Air 21 is also expected to be fierce with Team Jazy leading the race with 49 followed by Team Agnes (39) and Team Excellent (35).

Sy leads local racers in BRC

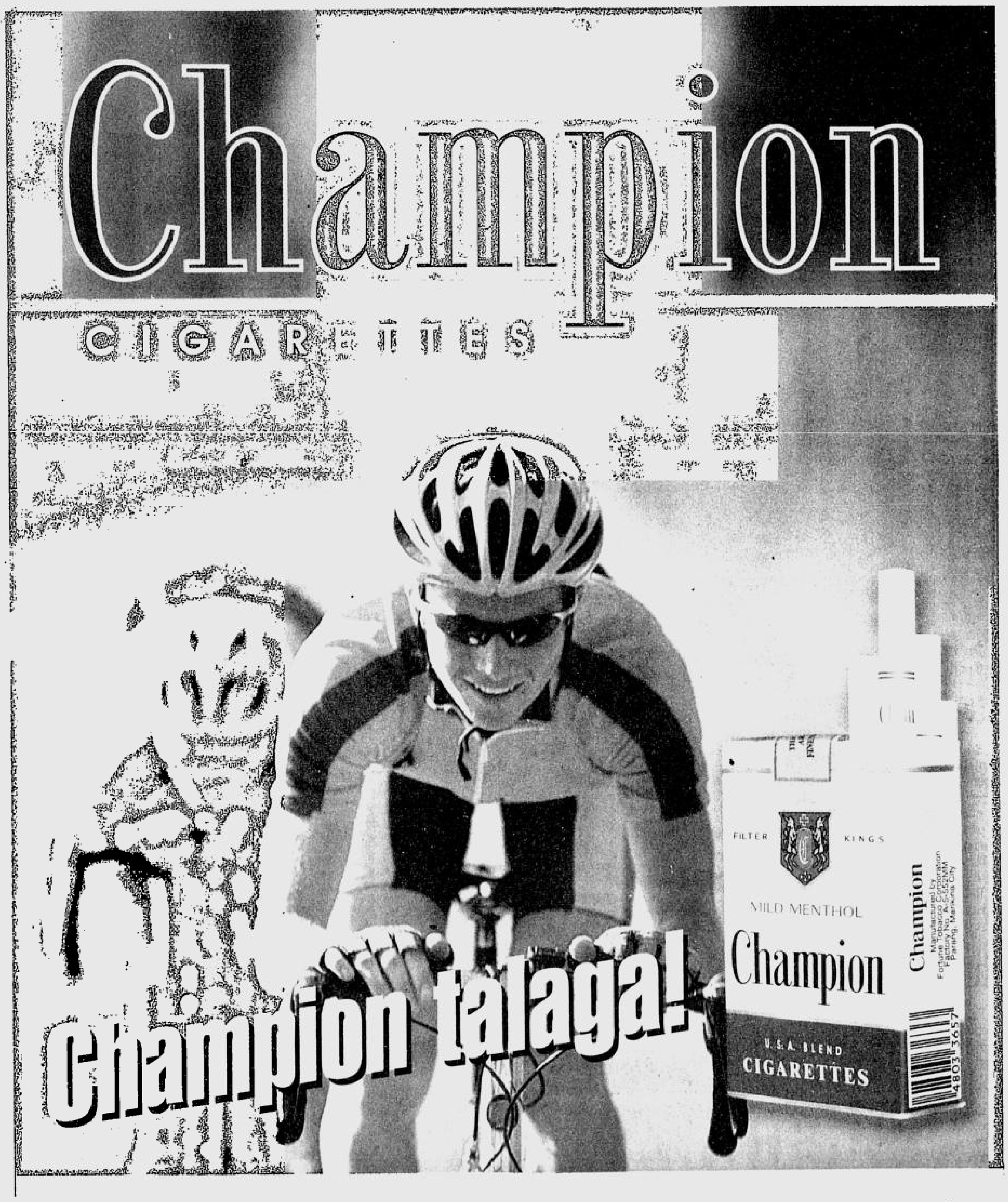
TWO big championship races, the 2004 Addict Mobile Asian Formula 3 Super Prix and the National Touring Car Championships, culminate Dec. 4-5 at the Batangas Racing Circuit in Maligaya, Rosario, Batangas.

SY: Racing prodigy

Top Filipino drivers Pepon Marave of Shell-Kinetic F3, Richard Joson of Denson-Hanjin JF3 and Castrol Team Goddard-Minardi Team Asia drivers Mark Goddard and Tyson Sy go up against foreign favorites Christian Jones of Australia and Shell-Kinetic F3 bet John O'Hara in the Asian Formula 3 finals sponsored by Addict Mobile, PLDT My DSL, Manila Bulletin, Yokohama, Denso, PCVC, DOT, TNT, Philippine Daily Inquirer, RCL and Top Gear.

The 17-year-old Sy is fresh from a successful Macau stint and is backed by Petron, San Miguel, Bosch, Demvels, Tiger Steel, A-Toy Body Kits, H&R Springs and Concept One.

SMB Strong Ice-Caltex Havoline driver Jody Coseteng likewise hopes to defend his title against Dominic Bon and Rey Reyes of Autoklasse in the National Touring Car Championship backed by the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office, Pilipinas Shell, Toyota , Norkis Yamaha, Kilton Motors, and MOF Company.



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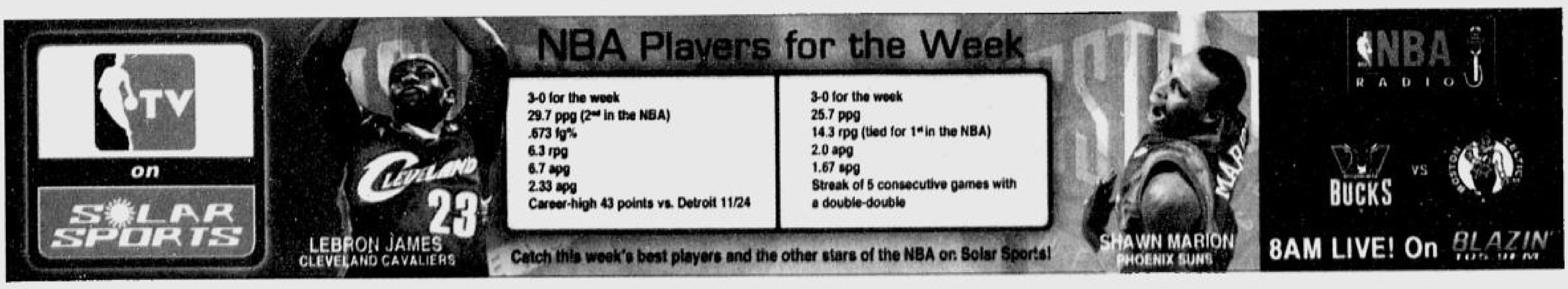

NBA Players for the Week

LEBRON JAMES
CLEVELAND CAVALIERS
3-0 for the week
29.7 ppg (2nd in the NBA)
.673 fg%
6.3 rpg
6.7 apg
2.33 apg
Career-high 43 points vs. Detroit 11/24

SHAWN MARION
PHOENIX SUNS
3-0 for the week
25.7 ppg
14.3 rpg (tied for 1st in the NBA)
2.0 apg
1.67 spg
Streak of 5 consecutive games with a double-double

Catch this week's best players and the other stars of the NBA on Solar Sports!

8AM LIVE! On

Cook fires up Lakers, Stojakovic lifts Kings

NBA STANDINGS

EASTERN CONFERENCE

Atlantic Division	W	L	PCT	GB
New York	7	6	.538	-
Philadelphia	6	7	.462	1
Toronto	7	9	.438	11/2
Boston	5	8	.385	2
New Jersey	3	11	.214	41/2
Southeast Division	**W**	**L**	**PCT**	**GB**
Miami	10	6	.625	-
Orlando	8	5	.615	1/2
Washington	7	5	.583	1
Charlotte	3	10	.231	51/2
Atlanta	2	12	.143	7
Chicago	1	10	.091	8
Central Division	**W**	**L**	**PCT**	**GB**
Indiana	10	4	.714	-
Cleveland	9	5	.643	-
Detroit	7	7	.500	3
Milwaukee	4	8	.333	5
Chicago	1	10	.091	71/2

WESTERN CONFERENCE

Southwest Division	W	L	PCT	GB
San Antonio	12	3	.800	-
Dallas	10	6	.625	21/2
Houston	6	10	.375	61/2
Memphis	5	10	.333	7
New Orleans	1	12	.077	10
Northwest Division	**W**	**L**	**PCT**	**GB**
Seattle	13	3	.813	-
Minnesota	8	5	.615	31/2
Utah	8	6	.571	4
Denver	8	6	.571	4
Portland	8	6	.571	4
Pacific Division	**W**	**L**	**PCT**	**GB**
Phoenix	12	2	.857	-
Sacramento	9	5	.643	3
LA Clippers	9	6	.600	31/2
LA Lakers	9	6	.600	31/2
Golden State	3	10	.231	81/2

MILWAUKEE—Brian Cook came off the bench to score a career-high 25 points, including five 3-pointers Tuesday, and Kobe Bryant added 20 points despite being held without a field goal for three quarters to lead the Los Angeles Lakers past the Milwaukee Bucks, 95-90.

Cook also had a career-high 11 rebounds and Lamar Odom added 16 points and 11 rebounds as the Lakers beat the Bucks for the second time in seven days and the eighth straight time overall.

"That's a sign of a good team," Lakers coach Rudy Tomjanovich said. "It doesn't always have to be the same guy who is stepping up."

Desmond Mason had 32 points, Maurice Williams added 21 points, 11 assists and seven rebounds for the Bucks, who were looking for their first victory over the Lakers since March 21, 2001.

In Memphis, Tennessee, Peja Stojakovic had 29 points, and Chris Webber added 22 points and 11 rebounds to help Sacramento trip Memphis, 98-93.

The loss was the Grizzlies' second straight at home and fourth straight overall, three of them coming since former coach Hubie Brown resigned unexpectedly.

In Atlanta, Jamal Crawford's 3-pointer with 3.4 seconds left in overtime won it for New York, which nipped the Hawks, 110-109.

Atlanta, leading by a point, had a foul to waste and coach Mike Woodson was yelling that message from the sideline. But Crawford launched the game-winner from the top of the circle before Atlanta's defenders could respond.

In Miami, Jalen Rose scored 24 points, including the decisive free throws with 15.6 seconds left, to help Toronto nip Miami, 94-92, to snap a six-game road losing streak.

Shaquille O'Neal led Miami with a season-high 34 points, shooting 12-for-15 from the field and 10-of-13 from the foul line. He entered the game a 43-percent foul shooter.

In East Rutherford, New Jersey, Richard Jefferson scored 23 points and Eric Williams had a season-high 22 to help New Jersey end a nine-game losing streak with a 99-86 drubbing of Charlotte.

The Nets, playing their first home game following an 0-4 Western trip, had four players in double figures. Alonzo Mourning scored 18 points with 11 rebounds.

In Dallas, Devin Brown sparked a fourth-quarter spurt with two three-point plays and two dunks, helping San Antonio spoil the pseudo-coaching debut of Avery Johnson via a 107-89 rout of the Mavericks.

Johnson, the hand-picked successor of Dallas coach Don Nelson, ran the game as if the job was already his. Nelson was there, too, but offered only suggestions. This was the first of about six such training sessions Nelson has planned.

In Houston, Antonio McDyess had 19 points and 10 rebounds, and Richard Hamilton also scored 19, helping Detroit beat Houston, 93-72, to snap a five-game road losing streak.

The Pistons hadn't won away from home since Nov. 8 against the Los Angeles Clippers but got little resistance from the Rockets. Houston dropped its fifth straight at the Toyota Center.

McDyess filled in admirably for All-Star center Ben Wallace, who completed a six-game suspension for his role in the Nov. 19 brawl with the Indiana Pacers.

In Salt Lake City, Steve Nash had 20 points and 14 assists to lead Phoenix past Utah, 115-102, for its eighth straight win.

Amare Stoudemire scored 29 points, Shawn Marion scored 21 and both pulled down nine rebounds for the Suns, who were too fast for Utah and outscored the Jazz 33-22 in the fourth quarter.

Utah was playing its first of at least five games without star forward Andrei Kirilenko, who was placed on the injured list Tuesday with a sprained knee ligament.

In Portland, Oregon, Zach Randolph had 19 points, including a key jumper with 17.2 seconds left, as Portland beat the Supersonics, 100-94.

The Blazers snapped a four-game winning streak for Seattle (13-3), which was off to its best start since they opened the 1993-94 season 16-1. *AP*

DALLAS
41
GRIZZLIES
16
6
13

GERMAN Dirk Nowitzki (#41) of the Mavericks and Spanish Pau Gasol of the Grizzlies, two of the hottest foreign talents in the NBA, soar high for dunks in Wednesday's games. Unfortunately, both players failed to save their squads from defeat. AFP

Casas, Pactolerin head Ideal cast

FORMER Philippine Open champions Cassius Casas and Robert Pactolerin lead a lean but mean cast in the first-ever Ideal Travel and Tours Invitational Pro-Am set Dec. 13-14.

The 36-year-old Casas and the burly Pactolerin were the first to confirm participation in the 36-hole event backed by ITT, a company that specializes in sea vessel tours and cruises in Subic Bay.

Casas, who won the Strong Republic Nautical Highway Super Tour last July, welcomed the event, one of a few for the tournament-hungry professionals of the country.

Casas has stayed in shape, his strenuous conditioning regimen that includes weight lifting and road work proving to be major factors during the Super Tour.

"Everybody's in shape," said Casas in Filipino. "This tournament's good for us because we're really looking for competition."

The core of the Philippine amateur training pool led by World Amateur veterans Juvic Pagunsan, Michael Bibat and Artemio Murakami has also been invited and will play two rounds against a crack Japanese field.

Reigning Canlubang Amateur champion Boyet Saragoza, current RP Open champ Jun Bernis and the long-hitting Marvin Dumandan are also expected to be in the field that also plays 36 holes.

Caloy Nival, on the other hand, leads a stellar senior cast in the 3-in-1 event that stakes cash prizes in the professional divisions and a cruise of Subic Bay to the amateur winner.

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UST sweeps WBL

UNIVERSITY of Santo Tomas whipped San Beda College-Alabang, 42-31, recently to complete a sweep of the college division title in the Milo BEST Women's Basketball League (WBL) at the Loyola Center in Quezon City.

After a shaky first half performance, the Lady Tigresses unloaded eight straight points in the third quarter to take a double-digit lead and never looked back.

Guard Irene Lacaba spearheaded UST's attack with 12 points.

De La Salle Zobel, St. Bridget's School and Miriam College shared the day's honors by taking the high school (competitive), high school (developmental) and elementary titles, respectively.

DLSZ banked on Fiona Molina and Eileen Urieta to rout St. Scholastica's College, 64-47; St. Bridget's trimmed Community of Learners, 40-36; and Miriam crushed Poveda Institute of Learning, 56-23.

The most valuable player awards went to Jennifer Dimaano (elementary), Marqueza Katrina Reyes (developmental) and Molina (competitive) while the Sportsmanship Awards went to St. Scholastica (elementary), St. Bridget (developmental) and DLSZ (competitive).

STA. LUCIA GOLF

Alta Vista eyes title

NEEDING just one division win to wrap up the coveted overall plum, a fired-up Alta Vista Golf and Country Club of Cebu tries to turn the final leg of the 2004 Sta. Lucia Golf Tour into a mere victory walk when action resumes at two venues tomorrow and Saturday.

The Norman course of the Eagle Ridge Golf and Country Club and the Palmer course of the Orchard Golf and Country Club will be co-hosting the 36-hole culmination of the nationwide series featuring seven Sta. Lucia-developed clubs with the 288-player field switching courses on both days.

A rousing performance at their home course enabled the Alta Vistans to sweep ahead away by seven points going into final leg and bolster their bid to reclaim the Sta. Lucia Cup they won just once two years ago.

The standings going into this weekend's battles show Alta Vista with a 65-point total for two legs. Rancho Palos Verdes of Davao is next at 58, defending and four-time champion Eagle Ridge is at 56 while Royale Tagaytay and Orchard are far behind at 33 and 32, respectively. Summit Point (16) and Caliraya Springs (8) didn't field enough entries to contend for the crown.

Globe Platinum is the major sponsor of the Sta. Lucia Tour's fifth season. The other backers are Samsung, Omega, Titleist, Footjoy, Cobra (hole-in-one sponsors), Pagcor, Cebu Pacific, Unirock, Readycon, Marco Polo (Davao), Marriot (Cebu) and The Bellevue Hotel (Manila), Philippine Airlines, Pisanti, Kodak Express, Purefoods Corned Beef, Red Bull Barako and San Miguel Corp.

Eagle and Palos Verdes carry the daunting task of sweeping all three divisions to get the chance of denying an impending Alta Vista romp of the overall title. What could add to their woes is the unpredictable weather conditions Metro Manila had suffered the past three days.

Oldest player leads Fil-Am seniors golf

BAGUIO CITY—Honorio Zapata, 82, the oldest player in the seniors division of the 55th Fil-Am Golf Tournament, scored 25 points to lead the Philippine Seniors Founders and virtually give his team the title for Flight C in the Am division.

The PSF team has a two-day total of 172 points in the PAL Stableford Scoring System, 43 more than second-placer Green Water Meadows.

Zapata is playing his 35th Fil Am tournament.

Tournament officials, however, said the oldest player in the tournament is Al Frick, who is nearing 90, but who refused to play in the seniors division.

Frick is playing for Baguio Country Club (BCC) in the regular tournament. He is in Flight F of the "Fil" division.

In the championship flight of the Am division, Camp Aguinaldo Golf Club widened its lead over the Hawaii-based Aloha Golf Club, 172-157.

In Flight A of Am seniors division, Camp John Hay again used its home court advantage to up its total to 180 points but Guam-based Chamorro Golf Club garnered 96 points for the day to climb from fourth to second with a two-day aggregate of 162.

Accel Sports led Flight B of the Am division with 171 points followed by Baguio Country Club and Macabud Seniors. In the Fil division, Herr Bautista scored 21 points to lead BCC with 157, four points ahead of the Rural Bankers Association of the Philippines.

The Fil Am organizers started the regular tournament with Flight F to decongest the player traffic next week.

More than 1,000 are expected to play in both the seniors and regular tournaments. *Frank Cimatu, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

At long last love for Bridget Jones

ZHE'S BACK. Renee Zellweger is the funny, lovable Bridget again

OSCAR winner Renee Zellweger ends 2004 in the role she made famous in 2001 and earned her a lot of acting nominations and new fans.

Zelwegger again plays Bridget Jones, the chubby, error-prone, cigarette yearning London gal who became the symbol of every office girl struggling to find her right spot in the workplace, and possibly the man of her fantasy.

And to throw her into the contemporary madness of romantic entanglements, her costars—the handsome Hugh Grant and fine actor Colin Firth—also make a comeback in this sequel as the men who wear out Bridget's heart and happiness.

The sequel, "Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason," has the 30-something heroine finally finding romantic bliss. For six glorious weeks, she has been the girlfriend of the handsome human rights lawyer Mark Darcy (Colin Firth) who make that period ecstatic for her.

But despite Darcy's apparent devotion, Bridget still finds herself asking questions about life, love and the proper way to put away underwear. She can't help but wonder: What exactly comes after the happily ever after?

Just as she's starting to figure it all out, enter the competition. Darcy's beautiful and perfectly mannered colleague, Rebecca, arrives at the scene. Suddenly jealousy, uncertainty, and temptation—in the form of Bridget's former boss and womanizing heartthrob Daniel Cleaver (Hugh Grant)—threaten to burst Bridget's dream in a comic maze of bad advice, silly mix-ups and total disasters that could only happen to her.

The story travels from the streets of London to the shores of Thailand and finds Bridget skydiving (or falling), skiing (sort of) and going straight to jail (all a big mistake, really).

"Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason" takes Bridget on a hilarious and unexpected new journey as she navigates the treacherous territory of modern love without ever losing her inimitable sense of humor.

Producer Eric Fellner notes: "Bridget has always been about dreams and fantasies. But now that she's actually got a boyfriend, she's faced with trying to live with a more messy reality.

"In this new story, we intended to create a picture of a woman who faces all the adversity of love and still manages to mostly laugh at it all while coming around to a better understanding."

A prelude to the Christmas holidays, the funny and well-acted movie "Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason" opened yesterday in theaters nationwide.

MOVIE GUIDE

NOW SHOWING

CINEMA 2000
Movie Theatres of the New Millenium

Cinema 2000 Target Mall
(Sta. Rosa, Laguna) tel (049) 837.0926
1 RESERVED
2 RESERVED
3 (DTS) RESERVED

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Calamba) tel (049) 545.7383
1 PASIYAM
2 (DTS) AFTER THE SUNSET
3 (DOLBY) TAXI
4 ALEXANDER

Cinema 2000 Pavilion Mall
(Biñan) tel (049) 411.1146
1 BCUZ OF U
2 (DOLBY) ALEXANDER
3 (DTS) TAXI
4 PASIYAM

Cinema 2000 Cinemagix
(Urdaneta) tel(075) 568.6771
1 SAFTER THE SUNSET
2 BCUZ OF U
3 (DOLBY) SURVIVING CHRISTMAS

Lianas MovieCity
(Calamba) tel (049) 545.7202
1 (DOLBY) AFTER THE SUNSET
2 NAKAW NA SANDALI
3 (DTS) ALEXANDER
4 TAXI
5 PASIYAM

Mega Center Mall
(Cabanatuan City) tel (044) 463.3283
1 BCUZ OF U
2 ALEXANDER
3 (DTS) BEFORE SUNSET
4 (DOLBY) THE INCREDIBLE

Fiesta World Mall
(Lipa) tel (043) 981.0790
1 AFTER THE SUNSET
2 NATIONAL TREASURE
3 TAXI
4 FOREVER MY LOVE

Cinema 2000 Metrotown
(Tarlac) tel (045) 982.1729
1 BCUZ OF U
2 WICKER PARK
3 (DOLBY) OUT OF REACH
4 (DTS) TAXI

Jade Cinema
(Angeles City) tel (045) 887.5001 to 03
1 (DOLBY EX) ALEXANDER
2 SAW
3 (DTS ES) BRIDGET JONES
4 NATIONAL TREASURE

Cine Nepo
(Angeles City) tel (045) 887.0121
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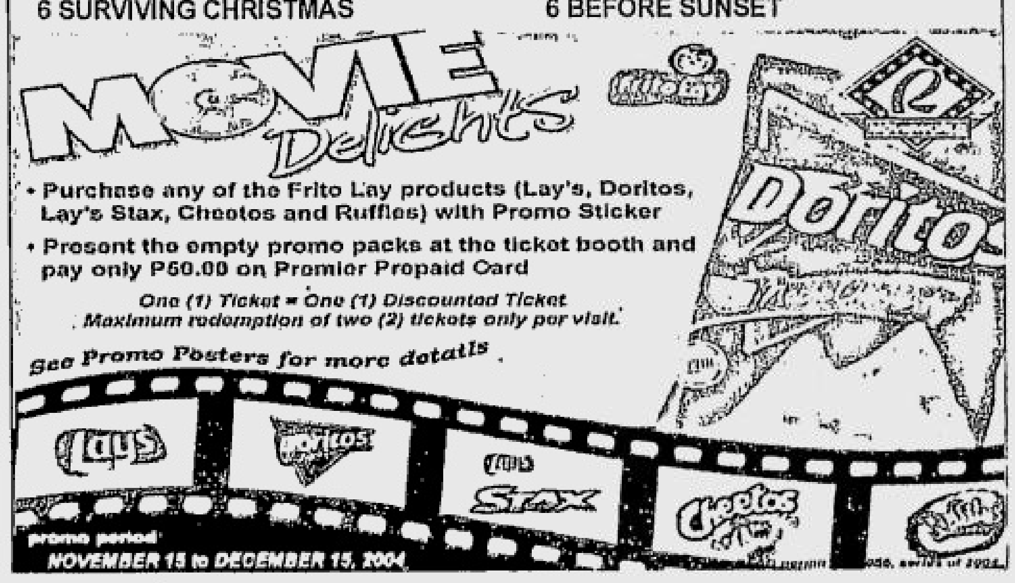

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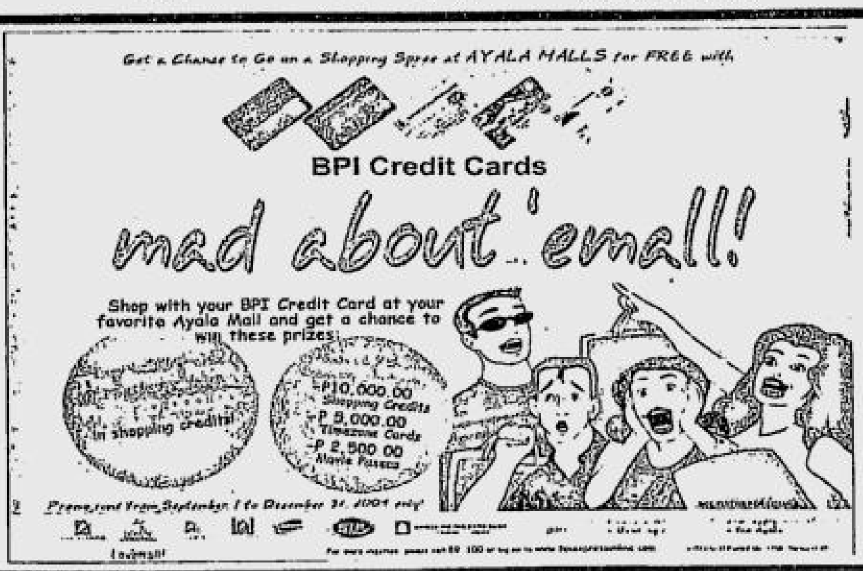
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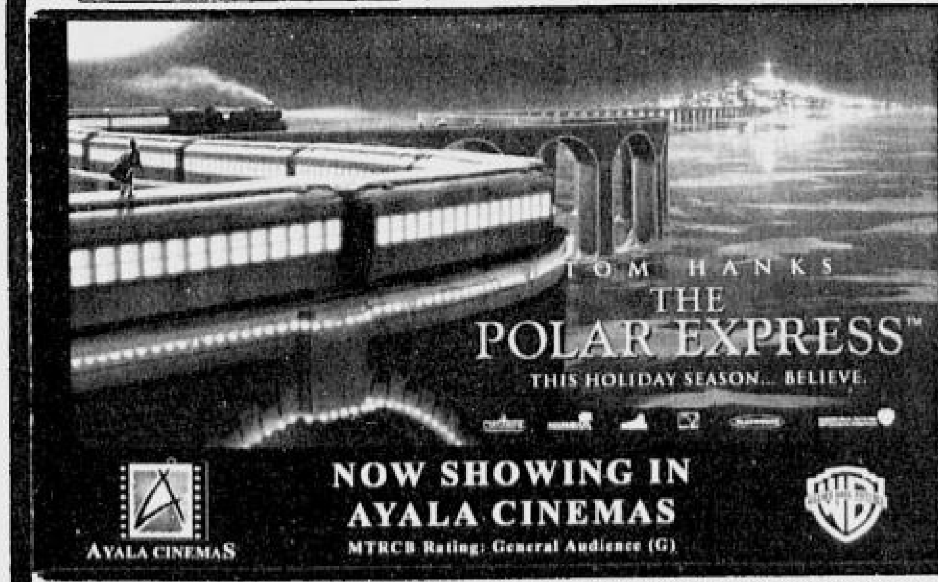
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'Eat Bulaga' to renew contract with GMA-7

DOLLY WOOD

Dolly Ann Carvajal

A GMA-7 insider tipped me that "Eat Bulaga" is going to renew its contract with the network.

That douses the rumor that the longest-running noontime show is moving to ABC 5. After celebrating 25 successful years, the "Eat Bulaga" phenomenon continues to conquer the entire nation. I guess the secret of its success is that it's one big happy family. And of course its originality spells the difference. As my mom used to say, "In a world full of copies, here's to the originals!"

Monsour's marriage

MARRIAGE suits Monsour del Rosario well. I've never seen him so happy.

Mon's charming petite wife Joy would rather keep things private so he is shielding her from show biz as much as possible. That's why when they tied the knot a few months ago, it was not the usual "carnival."

I find it ridiculous when networks try to outdo each other in getting exclusive coverage of celebrities' weddings. They even show the preparations all the way up to the reception. I won't be surprised if one day they will even intrude on the honeymoon and air it as surprise footage.

It's so refreshing to hear about couples like Mon and Joy who keep a low profile. They are so secure in their relationship that they don't need to fuss about it.

Mon beamed, "I married my best friend. She is as athletic as I am. We never run out of fun things to do together. She respects my work and gives me space when necessary.

"We are so excited to have babies. Of course, I want our eldest to be a boy. As soon as he learns to walk I will train him already in sports."

Mon is equally excited about his comeback movie with Ronnie Ricketts. With his taekwondo expertise and Ronnie's martial arts skills, it will definitely be a different kind of action movie. Leave the stunt men and stand-ins to other pseudo-action stars who wear leather jackets even in the scorching heat. With Monsour, you'll always get the real thing, on and off cam!

Beaujolais blast

I HAD a blast at the Beaujolais party at the NBC Tent. It was such a delight to binge on all the yummy delicacies flown in from France.

I particularly enjoyed the giant chocolate mousse cake and the chocolate fondue fountain. It was worth ditching my diet that night.

Everybody eagerly awaited the raffle. They gave away spectacular prizes like jewelry, antiques and a roundtrip ticket to Paris.

Johnny Litton won a trip to Boracay with accommodations, but being the gallant gentleman that he is, Johnny requested that his prize be raffled off again. Too bad the lucky winner of the trip to Paris didn't opt to do a Johnny Litton.

Cavite 'revolt'

A READER from Cavite e-mailed me about a newsletter (inserted in a local Cavite paper) circulating in their city protesting the elimination of their "kababayan" Ailyn from "Starstruck" Here are some portions of her e-mail:

"This Monday edition of Starstruck just confirmed the error committed by [the show's staff], or it may be a real anomaly in this talent search (similar to filmfest scams?). You are a candidate for being voted out if you are one of these three: 1. You were the weakest for the week according to the jurors' votes. 2. You were the weakest in the number of text votes. Or 3. You were voted out by your co-survivors.

"But today's episode of Starstruck revealed that it was another survivor named Anna who was voted out by their co-survivors. How come she was not even included in the last three that were left last Friday? Anna was even called the second strongest survivor but I have a feeling that was really meant for Ailyn, considering her excellent performance for that week which was acclaimed by their mentors.

"I know Channel 7 will not correct their mistakes, but I still believe that the truth shall prevail and they should bring back their credibility.

"Maybe GMA-7 should look into this. They better appease the disgruntled Caviteno supporters of Ailyn, lest there would be a modern-day Cavite revolt."

MTV awards

IN THE countdown to the 2005 MTV Asia Awards in Bangkok on Feb. 5, 2005, MTV unveils more than 50 local and international nominees who will be honored in Asia's biggest pan-regional music event.

MTV viewers in Asia make an impact on picking the award winners as viewers cast votes for their favorite artists Nov. 15 to Jan. 15. The excitement continues to build as performers and awards presenters are announced in the coming weeks, culminating in one spectacular night where winners will be announced to a live audience of more than 7,000 spectators.

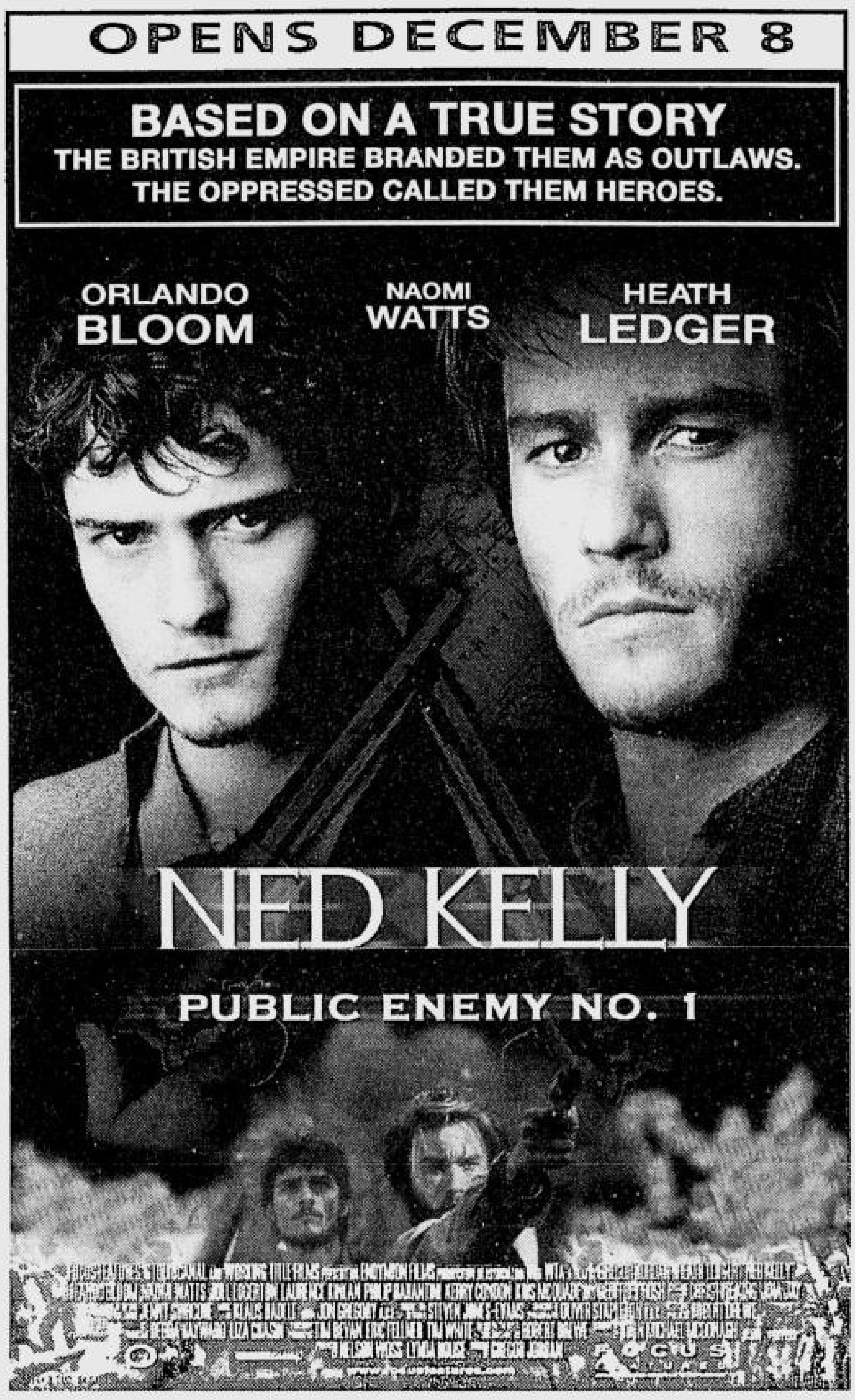
On the international front, Jet and Keane lead the pack with three nominations each. Asia's hot favorites include Siti Nurhaliza (Malaysia), Stefanie Sun (Singapore) and Jay Chou (Taiwan) who are nominated for the fourth consecutive year.

The awards have a total of 19 categories, 16 of which will be determined by viewers' votes. The remaining three honorary awards—The Asian Film Award, The Style Award and The Inspiration Award—will be presented by MTV Asia in recognition of key industry figures and trendsetters.

For the first time, the Inspiration Award will be focused on MTV's pro-social cause toward the HIV/AIDS Staying Alive campaign. The Staying Alive campaign was launched in 2002 aimed at reaching the widest possible audience for awareness of HIV infection and prevention.

With more than 50 percent of new HIV infections occurring among young people

EAT BULAGA/ A31



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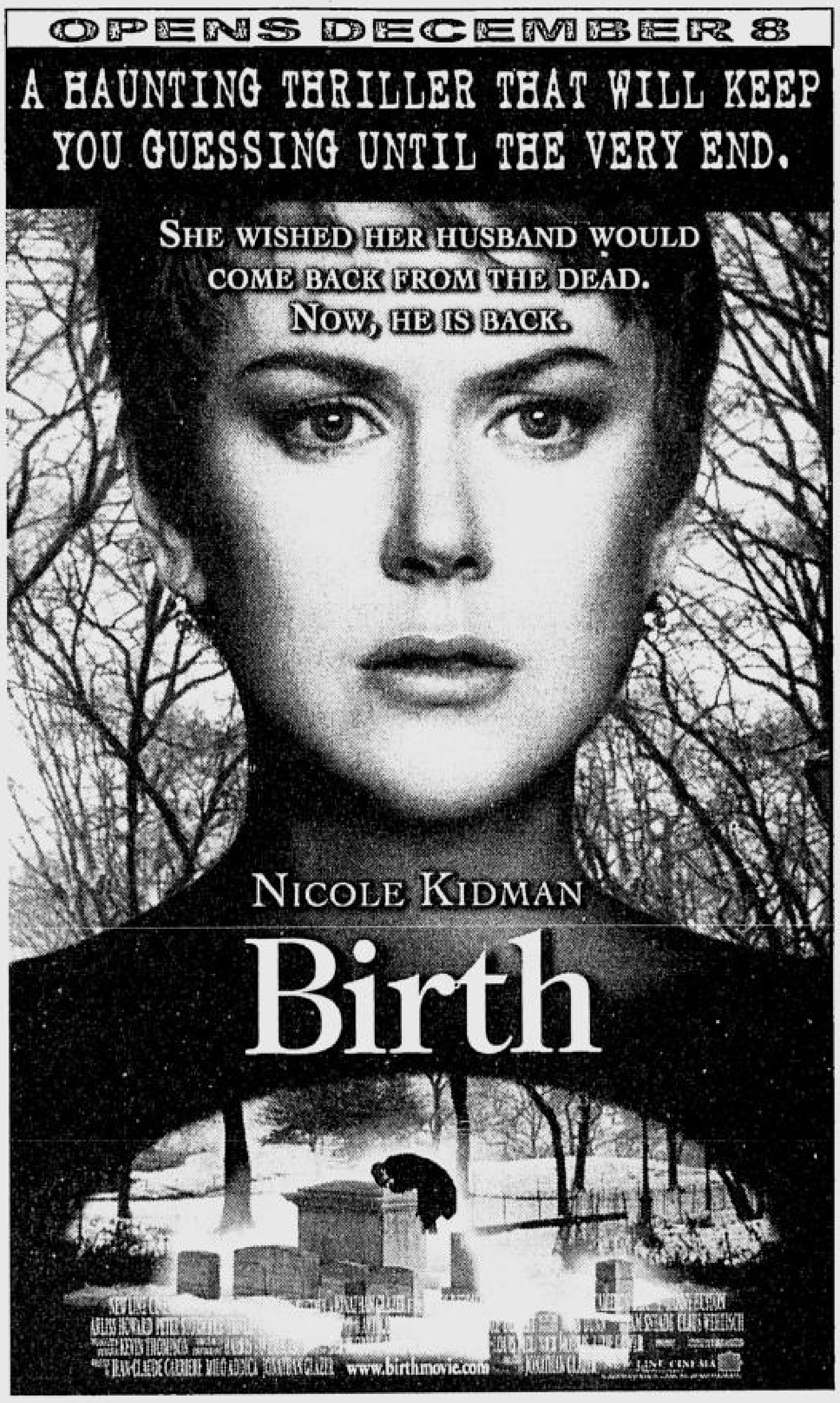

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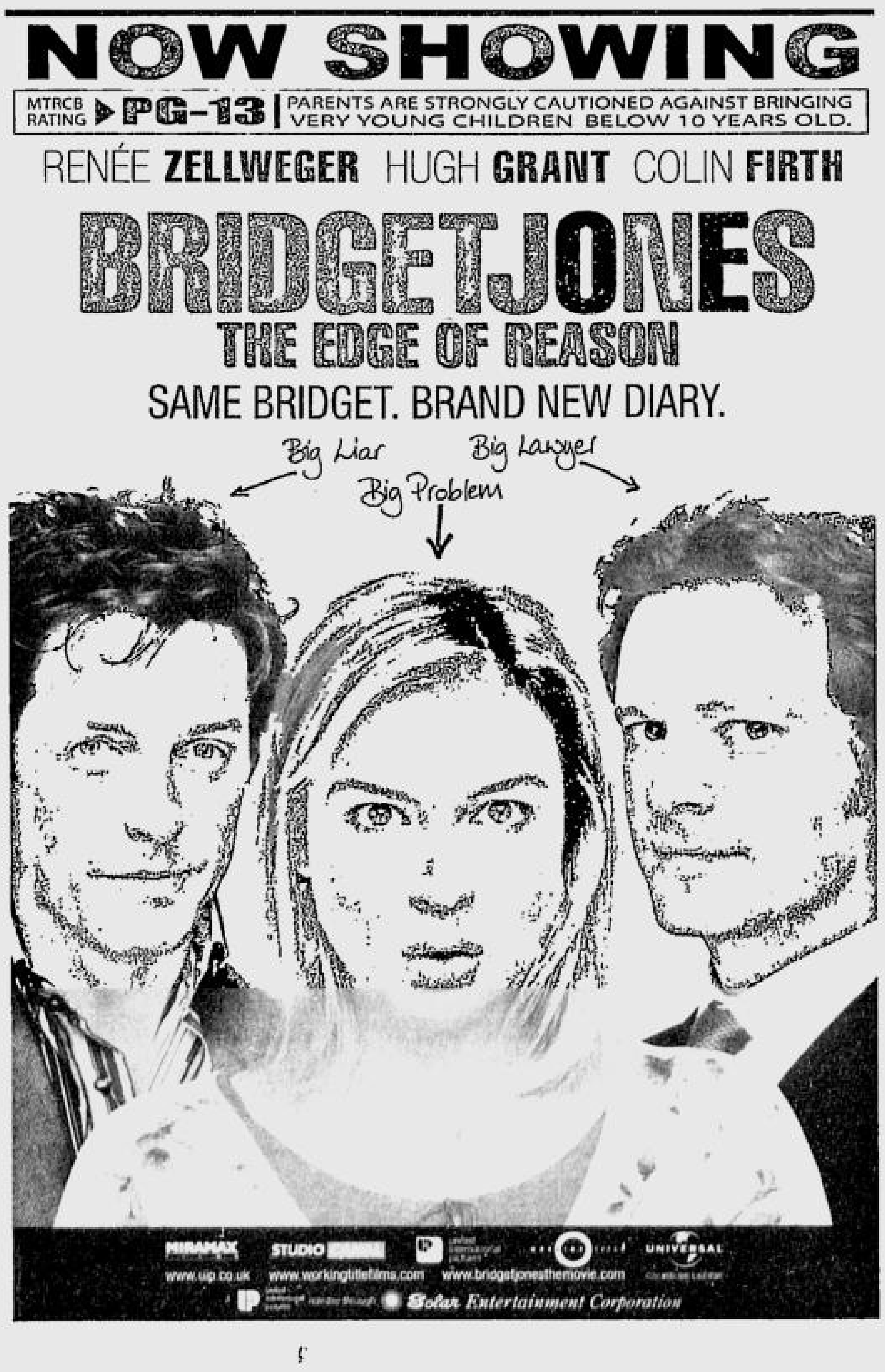

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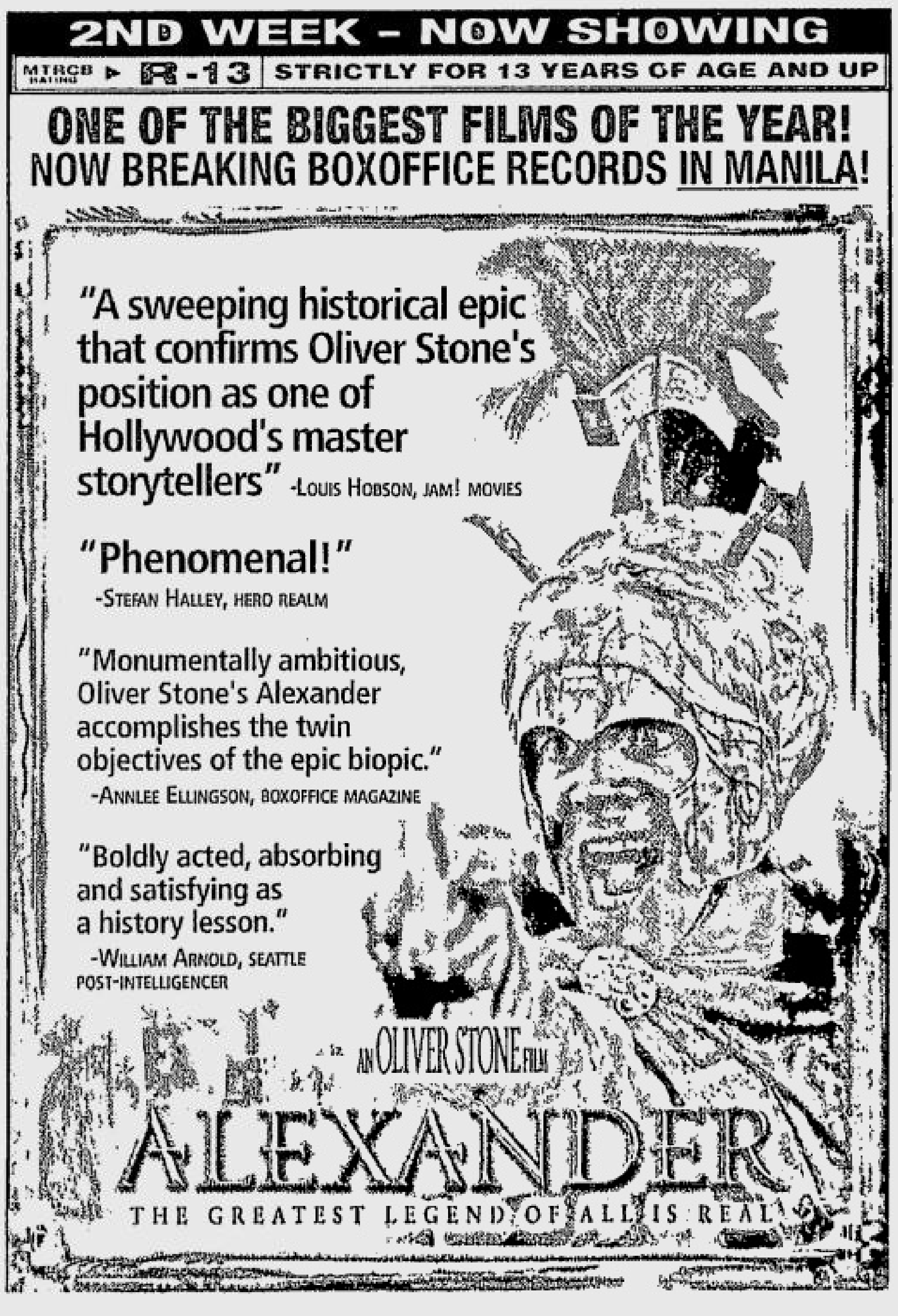

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Raki Vega tops 'Born Diva' tilt

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

LAST Saturday, Raki Vega scored an upset in Channel 2's "Born Diva" finals when she won the top plum over tough competition from **Shayne Corpuz** and **Shanice Michaels**. Raki came from behind, but her victory was well-deserved.

Shayne was the first of the three grand finalists to perform, and she made a strong impression with her polished and felt performance.

In fact, Shayne was so good that she unintentionally upstaged the celebrity singer tapped to perform with her during her suite of songs. By comparison, the celebrity guests' voice came off as rather thin and lacking in expressiveness.

It was a tribute to "unknown" Shayne that she came off better than the singing star she was paired with.

The idea to give each finalist her own "suite" of songs turned out to be inspired. It enabled each finalist to show off different facets of her talent, to impressive effect.

Raki was the second finalist to perform, and she surprised us with her truly focused and daring singing. She was the most musically ambitious of the three finalists, and her daring paid off.

Her celebrity "partner" that night was **Sheryn Regis**, who held her musical ground during their duet.

When our bet, Shanice, performed, we sensed that her voice wasn't at its best, so her suite, while compelling enough, wasn't as impressive as her previous performances.

The star singer assigned to her suite acquitted herself well enough.

As viewers waited for the judges' decision, we sensed that the top prize could go to Raki, because she had done really well that night.

That was fine with us. Predictions and educated guesses are OK, but what really counts is how the singers do during the finals night itself, and Raki simply came up with the best performance last Saturday.

We trust that she will take full advantage of the big break that her victory has given her, and establish herself as a major musical comer starting next year.

But Shayne and Shanice need not lose hope regarding their own singing careers.

"Born Diva" has shown what they can do, so we trust that they, too, will benefit from their months-long exposure in the TV tilt, even if they finally ended up as runners-up.

'Happy Tales' returns

THE HIGHLY rated animé series, "Happy Tales," by Dr. **Daisaku Ikeda**, aired very successfully over GMA-7 some months ago. The happy news is, the values-laden show will return to the TV screen daily at 9:30 a.m., starting Dec. 2.

This should please parents who bewail the lack of good shows for their young children. GMA-7 has received many calls and letters requesting that the series be played continuously, and this return engagement is the network's response to all those requests. The series has also been endorsed by the Department of Education.

"Happy Tales" dramatizes values and heartwarming stories with a rich Asian flavor. Its 14 episodes will be telecast until the Christmas holidays.

Produced by Shinano Video for Soka Gakkai International, "Happy Tales" has been introduced to the Philippines by the Southeast Asian Foundation for Children's television (SEAFCTV).

It is a frontrunner among Anak TV seal contenders this year. Anak TV is the seal of family-friendly TV decided upon by a jury of more than 2,000 nationwide.

The success of the Philippine showing of "Happy Tales" has encouraged Taiwan TV executives to telecast the series in the island republic next year. ATV station in Thailand is following suit.

Soka Gakkai-Philippines, SEAFCTV, the Department of Education and GMA Network will launch the series' DVD edition next year, to help in the promotion of sound values among Filipino children, particularly those studying in public grade schools.

Movies on TV

ON HBO, Dec. 2 at 12:45 p.m., "Hysterical Blindness." 3:50 p.m., "Frances." 9 p.m., "Anger Management." Dec. 3 at 4:05 p.m., "Streets of Fire." 12:45 a.m., "Carnivale: Insomnia."

On Cinemax, Dec. 2 at 12:45 p.m., "Strictly Ballroom." 7:15 p.m., "City by the Sea." Dec. 3 at 7:30 a.m., "Fahrenheit 451." 9:30 a.m., "Mind Games." 9 p.m., "The Sum of All Fears." 11 p.m., "The Assignment."

'The 4400'

EVERY Thursday at 9 p.m. starting Dec. 2, the AXN channel airs "The 4400," a series about 4,400 missing people who are returned, all at once, without having aged. It turns out that most of them have had unusual, life-changing abilities.

Masters of Chant take 'The Dark Side'

GREGORIAN, the Masters of Chant, take listeners on a journey in their new "The Dark Side" album.

In 1996 German producer Frank Peterson combined the traditional chants of medieval monks with modern pop songs and arranged the results for a Gregorian choir.

"The Gregorian: Masters of Chant" Volumes I to VI were a phenomenal commercial and critical success all over the globe, selling millions of copies.

The latest album from Gregorian, "The Dark Side," is another pleasant surprise for their growing fans. It contains hits from Evanescence ("My Immortal"), Alanis Morissette ("Uninvited"), The Rasmus ("In the Shadows"), Nick Cave and Kylie Minogue ("Where Wild Roses Grow"), Lita Ford and Ozzy Osbourne ("Close My Eyes Forever"), Nine-Inch Nails ("Hurt"), The Doors ("The End"), Alan Parsons Project ("The Raven"), Sisters of Mercy ("More"), Aphrodite's Child ("The Four Horsemen") and many more.

Gregorian remains a world wrapped in secrecy and anyone who thinks the singing monks' repertoire is no more than a random selection of producer-polished covers is making a mighty mistake.

Gregorian harmony uses just seven tones. Any song containing semitones is no longer considered.

Gregorian is supported by a flexible but solid musical foundation that uplifts, relaxes and sometimes even bothers the listeners.

'Eat Bulaga!'...

From page A30

between 15 and 25 years old, MTV knows that it has a role to play in raising awareness among its audience. The Inspiration Awards will be given to either an individual or organization that has made a positive contribution toward the HIV/AIDS cause in Asia.

DLSU seminar, concert

DLSU-AKI Family Business Studies Center will hold its "Professionalizing the Family Business" seminar on Dec. 3 and 4. Call 524-5333 or 5245369.

Also, catch De La Salle University's Chamber Ensemble's Christmas concert, "Chamber Carols," at DLSU on Dec. 3, Megamall on Dec. 20 at 3 and 5 p.m., and at the Podium on Dec. 21 at 8 p.m.

For feedback, e-mail wateringholeshangrila@yahoo.com or dollyanne@truefaithband.com

Boxoffice champ overseas: 'Alexander' conquers key territories

Oliver Stone, directing ALEXANDER

Three-time Academy Award winner Oliver Stone is undoubtedly the most controversial director in Hollywood, making films that are remarkable for both the way in which their subject matter is handled and the degree of controversy such handling inspires.

Stone is one of a handful of true artists left in modern cinema who will almost always place a greater importance on the craft rather than economic considerations. His Alexander reportedly cost more than $150m and another $75 m to promote the film worldwide.

The director managed to achieve a number of successes. The battles are spectacular, they are bigger and better than any sword and sandal films like Troy or Gladiator.

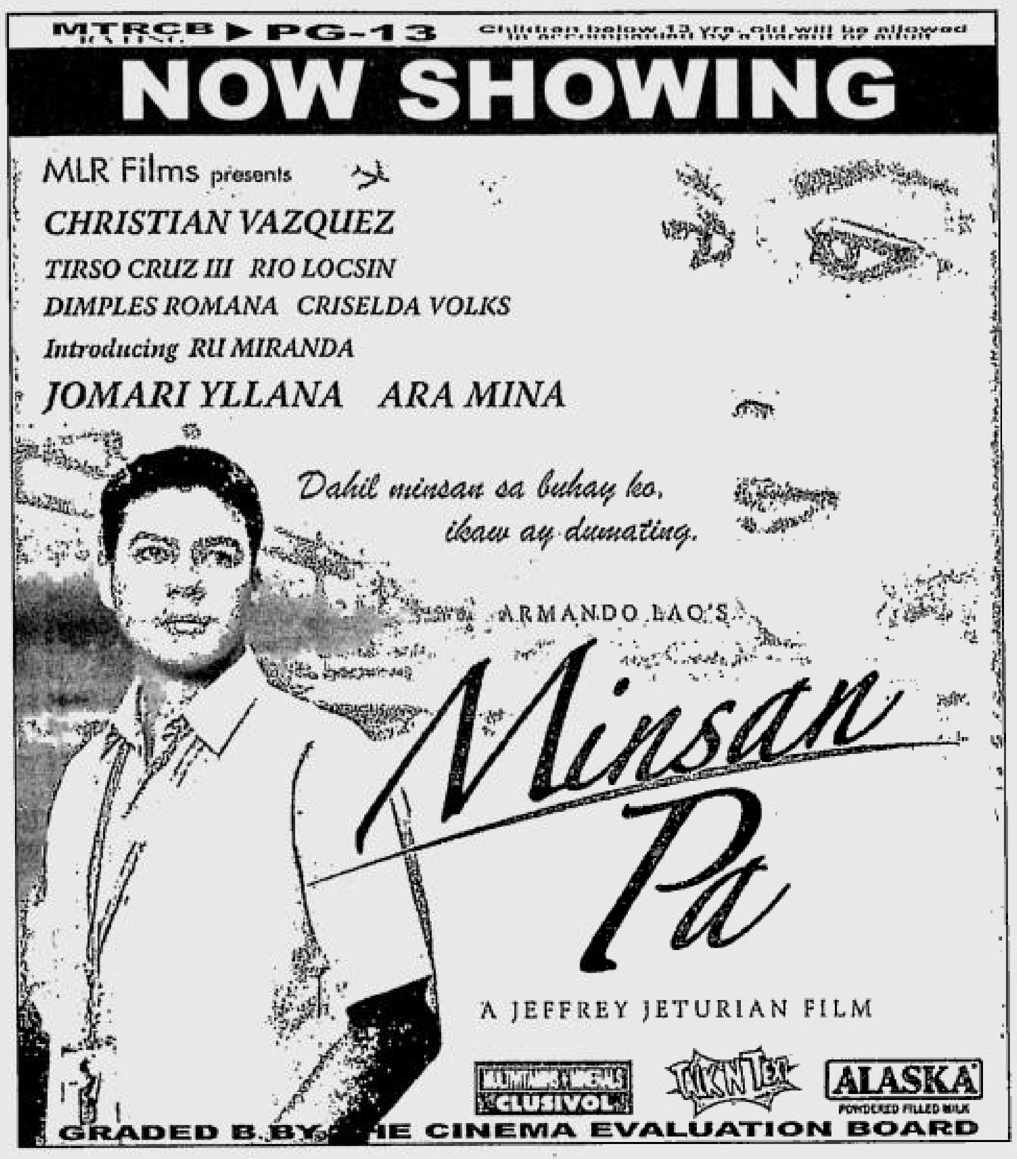
And the design and use of modern technology to create the famous Hanging Gardens of Babylon is nothing less than breathtaking, worthy of entry into the pantheon of epic art direction alongside that of Spartacus and Cecil B. DeMille's Cleopatra.

Distributor Warner Bros. expects huge returns for Alexander in the international market just like their in-house Greek epic, "Troy." Although Troy did not break boxoffice records in the United States this summer, it was a blockbuster in the international markets.

The Colin Farrell/Angelina Jolie starrer raked in $7.4 million from 848 screens in 10 markets. It commanded the top spots in all key markets led by Russia's estimated $3.7M on 345 screens, Taiwan's $1.1M on 190, Thailand's $476,000 on 110, Philipines' $800,000 on 120 Sweden's $474,000 on 61, Denmark's $420,000 on 48, Malaysia $300,000 on 25 and Croatia $250,000 on 20.

Although some countries like Greece banned the film, this won't affect the overall boxoffice receipts according to Warner Bros. [Stephen Halley, HERO REALM]•

ADVT



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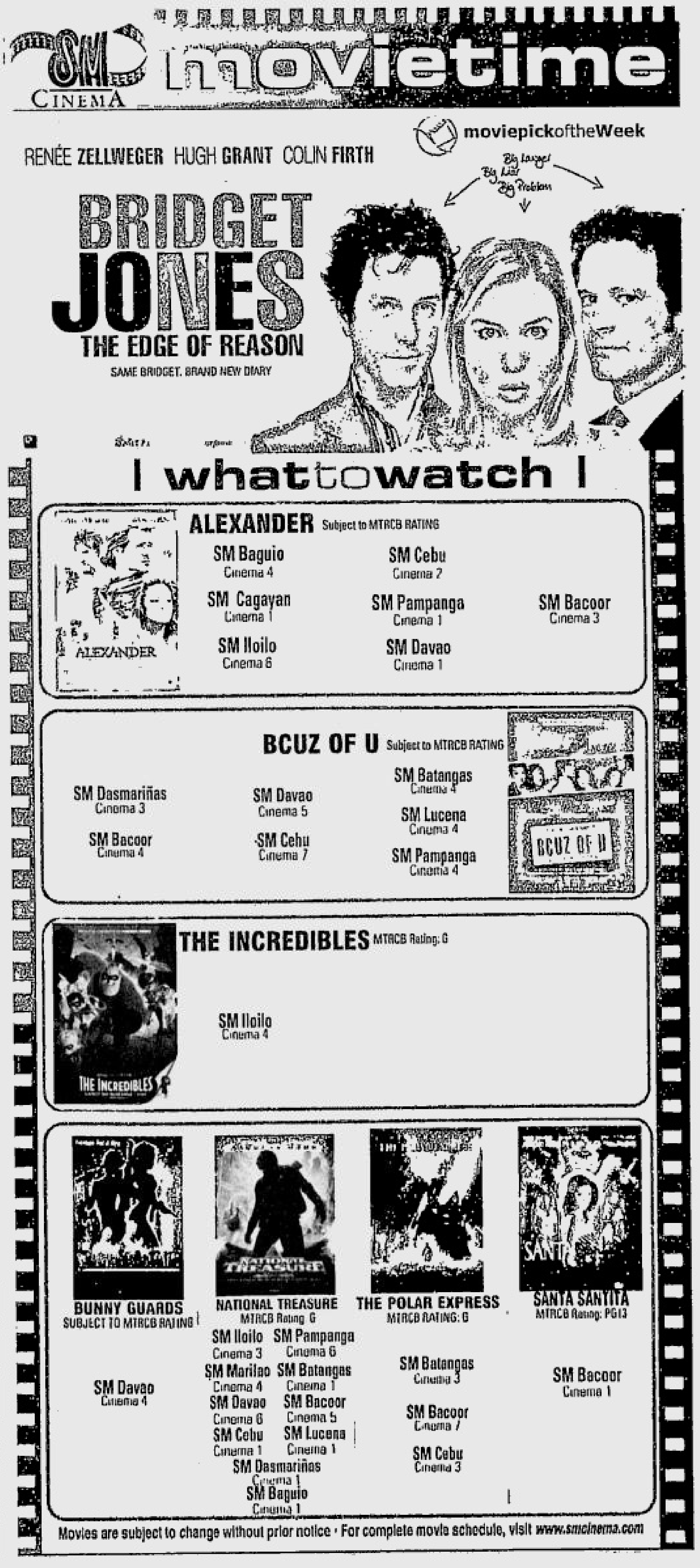

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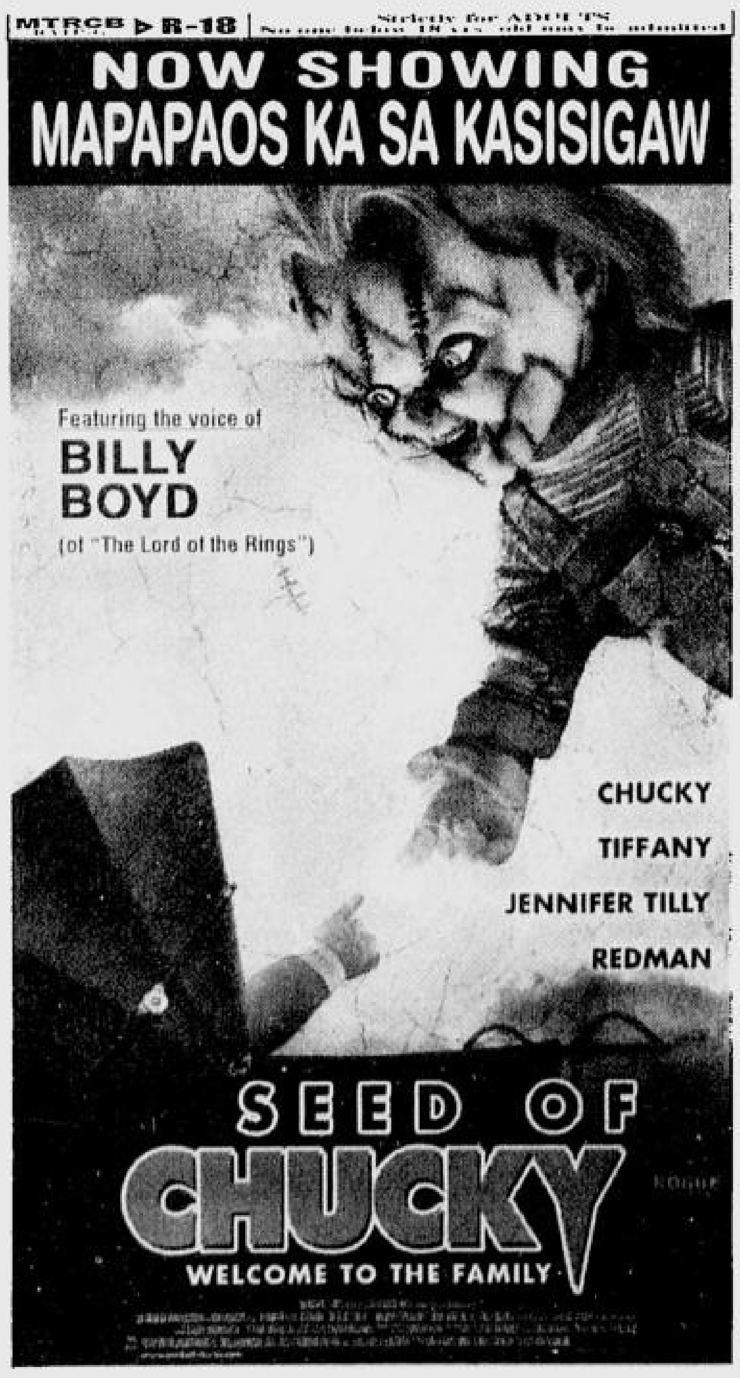

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SHOW STOPPER

THE BUZZ ON BOY AND KRIS LEAVING 'THE BUZZ'

'We promised each other we'd quit together'

By Marinel R. Cruz

TALK show host Boy Abunda is not quitting "The Buzz" anytime soon but he would leave the show if his co-host Kris Aquino would decide to resign—"five or six years from now."

"I told Kris that if one of us leaves, then the other would follow," Boy told INQUIRER Entertainment on the phone last Tuesday. "*Walang iwanan* [No one leaves the other]. But I said we should resign together five or six years from now."

Kris herself told INQUIRER Entertainment, "It's status quo, for now. Boy and I promised each other that if the time comes, we'd quit together.

"Other people can say the same thing [about doing something together] but they don't do it. Boy and I are true to our words.

"Why are they so *atat* to see us go?" added the outspoken host and actress.

Talk of Boy's quitting "The Buzz" began circulating in show biz circles when Kris, in a press conference for her new movie, "So Happy Together" from Regal Films, first brought up the idea of resigning from the Sunday afternoon show on ABS-CBN.

"Some people must have misunderstood Kris when she said we'd both resign," Boy stressed. "The possibility of me resigning from 'The Buzz' is remote right now.

"*Pero ayaw kong magsalita ng tapos* [But I'm not making it final]," Boy added quickly. "I know that I'm only as good as my last show."

Kris had admitted that she was "considering" giving up "The Buzz" because of her very hectic schedule. The actress-TV host is also a regular cast of the drama series "Hiram" and the game show "Game Ka Na Ba?" She is also in "So Happy Together" for the Metro Manila Film Festival, which starts on Christmas Day.

In "Hiram," however, Kris' character suddenly left the country to spend some time abroad.

'Other people can say the same thing [about doing something together] but they don't do it. Boy and I are true to our words'

"Another reason Kris thought about leaving was because some people felt she should not be reporting controversial stories while hosting a game show," someone close to Boy told INQUIRER Entertainment. "People say that, as a game show host, Kris' image should be beyond reproach.

"When [Boy] heard of this, he told Kris, '*Teka muna, bakit* 'Buzz' *na lang palagi* [Hold on, why does it have to be always 'The Buzz']?'" added the source.

In October 2003, Kris announced that she was quitting "The Buzz" as host because she would no longer be credible in interviewing stars about their lives and problems since she had personal problems herself. She had just had a sensational and violent breakup with her lover of one and a half years, former Parañaque Mayor Joey Marquez.

Added the source: "[Boy] asked why any of them would think of leaving the talk show when it is one of the few ABS-CBN programs that are doing well in the ratings, compared to its rival show on GMA 7."

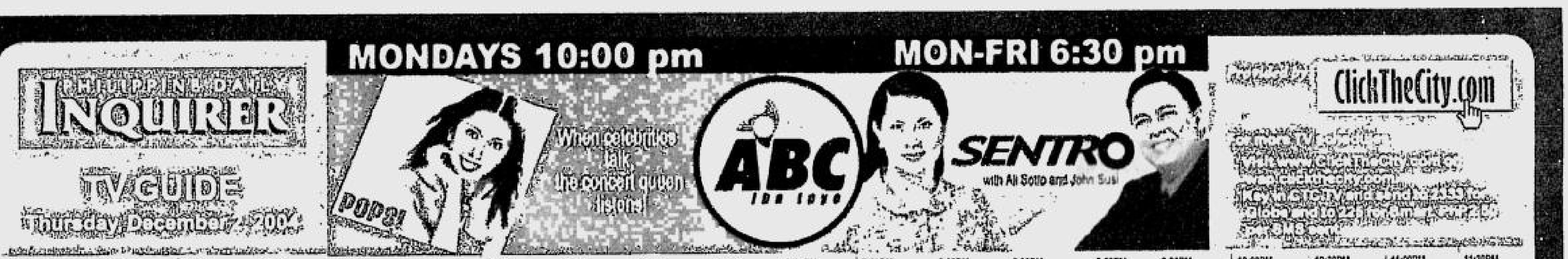
"I'm confident this news would not affect our show," said Boy.

"Besides, the show's hosts affect only a small portion of the ratings. Entertainment programs are story-driven. Good stories are still very important."

With Louie C. Camino

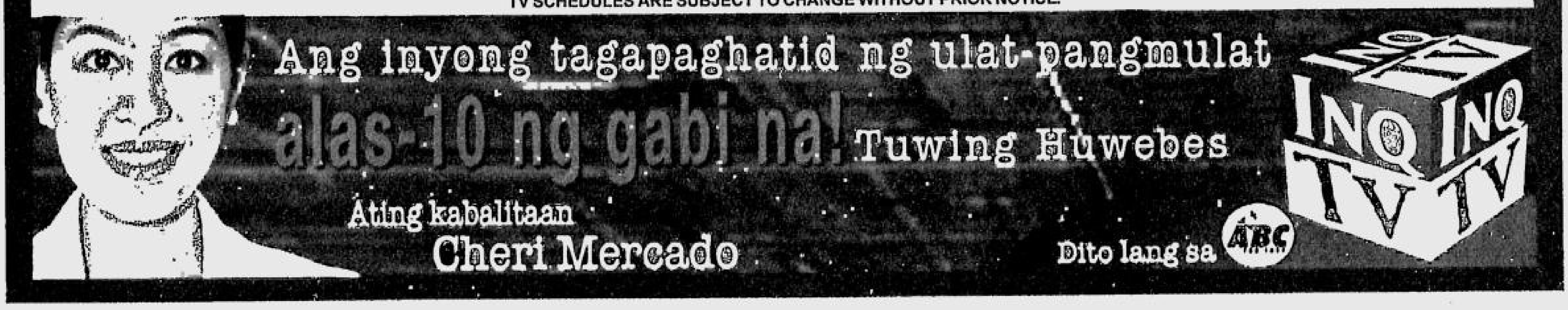
"*WALANG iwanan*," says Boy.

"WE'RE true to our words," says Kris.


PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
TV GUIDE
Thursday December 2, 2004
MONDAYS 10:00 pm
POPS!
When celebrities talk, the concert queen listens!
ABC
SENTRO
with Ali Sotto and John Susi
MON-FRI 6:30 pm
ClickTheCity.com

Channel	2:30PM	3:00PM	3:30PM	4:00PM	4:30PM	5:00PM	5:30PM	6:00PM	6:30PM	7:00PM	7:30PM	8:00PM	8:30PM	9:00PM	9:30PM	10:00PM	10:30PM	11:00PM	11:30PM
ABS-CBN 2				Showbiz No. 1	Sandara's Romance	Get Backers	Ragnarok	Masked Rider Ryuki	TV Patrol	Star Circle Nat'l Teen Quest	Krystala	Hiram	It Might Be You	Lovers In Paris	Maalaala Mo Kaya			Insider	Dong Puno
NBN	Value Vision				Teledyaryo	Value Vision		APEC Primer 3		Network Forum		Teledyaryo		Mosconi Cup 2003				Dial M	
ABC 5	Problema Nyo, Sagot Ko	PBA					Sentro	PBA					Big News	Inq TV		Fearless Fighting	Billboard On-Air		
GMA 7	Leya (2:45 PM)	Joyride (3:15 PM)	Snow Angel (3:45 PM)		One Piece	Rune Soldier	Slam Dunk	24 Oras		Extra Challenge		Mulawin (7:50 PM)		Starstruck (8:50 PM)	Forever In My Heart (9:20 PM)	Magpakailanman			Saksi
RPN 9	Metro TV Shopping			Diyos At Bayan		Wild Thornberries	Sponge Bob	Invader Zim	Entertainment Tonight	Sabrina	Raising Dad	Monk		Crossing Jordan		Newswatch Now	Video Hit Parade	Kasangga Mo Ang Langit	Police Hour
IBC 13		V League				IBC Express Balita		Home Shopping Network		D.E.N.R.		Travel	Japan Video Topic		Entrepinoy	Good Take	IBC News Tonite		
Solar		WWE Smackdown				Mutant League	Godzilla	Superman	Maxstool	Babylon V		Crossing Jordan		JAG					
Nickelodeon	Dora, The Explorer	Little Bear	Blues Clues	SpongeBob SquarePants	All That	Are You Afraid of the Dark?	100 Deeds of Eddie McDowd	The Amanda Show	The Brother's Garcia	Fairly Odd Parents	SpongeBob SquarePants	As Told By Ginger	Are You Afraid of the Dark?	All That	100 Deeds of Eddie McDowd	The Amanda Show	Rocket Power	The Wild Thornberrys	The Brother's Garcia
MYX		Urban MYX	MYX Backtrax	Pop MYX	OPM MYX	Take 5	My MYX	MYX Daily Top Ten		Mellow MYX	Rock MYX	Pop MYX	Urban MYX	MYX Presents		My MYX	MYX Backtrax	OPM MYX	Mellow MYX
ETC		Good Morning Miami	What I Like About You	The Today Show		Starting Over		NBC Nightly News	Entertainment Tonight	Will & Grace	JKX	Ed		Girls Behaving Badly	Simple Life 2	Tonight Show With Jay Leno		Blind Date	Fifth Wheel
Studio 23	Bewitched	Urban MYX	MYX Backtrax	UAAP				X-Men Evolution	Samurai Deeper Kyo	Wazzup Wazzup		Barkada Nights				News Central	The Oprah Winfrey Show		Spin City
AXN		20 Palms				The Amazing Race		Rave	Rave	Boomtown		30 Seconds To Fame	30 Seconds To Fame	The 4400		The Thirteenth Floor			
Star World		The Bold & The Beautiful		Hollywood Squares	Home Improvement	Baywatch Hawaii		The Simpsons	The Drew Carey Show	Star News Asia	Just Shoot Me	Smallville		The Simple Life	Young, Posh & Loaded	For Love Or Money		Just Shoot Me	Smallville
CNN				Business International		Larry King Live		World News	World Sport	Business International		World News Asia		World News	World Sport	World News Asia		World News	World Sport
National Geographic	On Assignment	Innovation		Frontiers Of Construction		Demolition Squad	Amazing Spaces	The Snake Wranglers	Croc Chronicles Dr. Brady Barr	Wild		About Asia		Nat'l Geographic Specials		Innovation		Frontiers Of Construction	
Solar Sports					Sounds of the Finals								NBA TV Daily						
Lifestyle Network	Secret Gardens Of	The Fix	Mission Organization	Carol Duvall	Molto Mario	Hot Off The Grill	Good Eats	Extreme Cuisine	Unwrapped	Tyler's Ultimate	Love Chain	Clean House		You're Invited	New York Nick	Breathing Room	Genuine Article	Planet Parent	Sam's Secrets
HBO	The Big Time (2:20 PM)			Frances (3:50 PM)				Going Under (6:10 PM)			Anti-Body			Anger Management			Blood Work (10:45PM)		
Star Movies	Lock Up			Sorority Boys (4:15 PM)			Heathers (5:45 PM)				Comic Book Villains			Holes				40 Days And 40 Nights	
Cartoon Network	Scooby-Doo Show	The All New Popeye Show		Richie Rich	Baby Looney Tunes	Sylvester & Tweety Mysteries	Police Academy	He-Man & The Masters Of The Universe	Teen Titans	Yu-Gi-Oh!	Gundam Seed	The Looney Tunes Show		Courage The Cowardly Dog	The Grim Adventures Of Billy & Mandy	The Addams Family	The Funky Phantom	Boomerang - Boomeraction	Yu-Gi-Oh!
ESPN		Pro Billiards '04 Int'l Challenge of Champs USA		Acc/Big Ten Challenge '04 USA				Acc/Big Ten Challenge '04 USA				Sportscenter Taiwan	Pool/Snooker World Pool Master '04 Poland Pro Billiards '04 Trick Shot Magic NY, USA		Pro Billiards '04 Int'l Challenge of Champs USA		Sportscenter Taiwan		
Disney Channel	Kim Possible	Totally Spies	Lizzie Mcguire	Even Stevens	That's So Raven	Martin Mystery	Totally Spies	The Legend Of Tarzan	Lilo & Stitch/Un-talkative Bunny	America's Funniest Home Video	Wonderful World Of Disney			My Wife And Kids	That's So Raven	According To Jim	America's Funniest Home Video	Wonderful World Of Disney	
Cinemax	Cover Girl			Gold Diggers: The Secret Of Bear Mountain			Dead Air (5:45 PM)			City By The Sea (7:15 PM)				Dirty Deeds			When Trumpets Fade (10:35PM)		
Hallmark Channel	Mad About You	Burn				Play With Me Sesame	Sesame Street		Bewitched	Mysterious Ways		Strong Medicine		Word Of Honor			Sue Thomas: F.B.Eye		Mysterious Ways
Discovery Channel		Hour Asia				Wild Discovery		Ultimate Discovery		Monster Garage		Extreme Machines		Wild Discovery		Ultimate Discovery		Power Zone	
MTV Philippines		MTV Asia Hitlist		Non-Stop Hits		Non-Stop Hits		MTV Get Spotted	MTV Loveline			MTV Jams	Rouge	TRL		Globally Dismissed	Pimp My Ride	VH1 Hits! Video Collection	
Sports Plus					Inside the PGA	Big 12 College Kansas vs Oklahoma Nat'l					Raceworld		Superbowl8 Dolphins vs Vikings		Golf Academy 2002	WTA Semi-Finals Linz			
EWTN	A Christian Pilgrimage To Jordan	Angelus (3:15PM)	Suffering Church	Angel Force	Children's Rosary	The Holy Rosary With Mother Angelica and the Nuns Of Our Lady Of Angels Monastery	The Spirit Of Catholic Leadership	Saints: A Closer Look	EWTN Gallery	EWTN Live With Father Mitch Pacwa		Pope John Paul's Legacy To The Family	Council Of Faith	Daily Mass		Angelus (10:15PM)	Holy Spirit In The Church	The Journey Home	

TV SCHEDULES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE.


Ang inyong tagapaghatid ng ulat-pangmulat
alas-10 ng gabi na! Tuwing Huwebes
Ating kabalitaan
Cheri Mercado
Dito lang sa ABC
INQ TV

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 2, 2004

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

BUSINESS

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B1

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AVAILABLE IN TOURING, EXTRA, RALLYE, RACE.

SLEX rehab, extension lure 24 firms

By Ronnel W. Domingo

TEN construction firms have expressed interest in bidding for the rehabilitation of the Alabang viaduct while another 14 companies are keen on vying for the project to link the South Luzon Expressway (SLEX) with the Southern Tagalog Arterial Road (STAR).

Noel Kintanar, a consultant working with the Department of Trade and Industry, said bidding for the viaduct repair was set on Dec. 10 while that for the expressway extension was set on Dec. 20 or Dec. 27.

The contract for the viaduct repair is expected to be awarded on Jan. 2 while construction work would start within the same month.

Government documents showed that the following companies have expressed interest to bid for the viaduct repair: FF Cruz, Cavite Ideal, EC de Luna Construction Corp., J Pajara Construction Corp., Ciriaco Corp., China State Engineering Corp., William Uy Construction Corp., Dimson Manila, RV Policarpio and Co., CM Pancho Construction.

FF Cruz, De Luna, Cavide Ideal, William Uy, Policarpio and Dimson Manila are also among the 14 companies interested in bidding for the SLEX-STAR link that stretches from Calamba in Laguna to Sto. Tomas in Batangas.

Kintanar said in an interview last November that the viaduct rehabilitation and the SLEX extension would each cost at least P800 million, plus at least P900 million allocated for right-of-way acquisition.

The total amount for the two projects could reach about P3 billion depending on the final tender offered, he added.

Kintanar said that Philippine Infrastructure Corp. has lined up a P10-billion package—including the two project—as its flagship venture in 2005.

The package would include the P7-billion widening of the SLEX segment from the Alabang viaduct to Calamba in Laguna.

Kintanar said the government's plan was for PIC to build a portfolio of projects worth P100 billion over a period of six years.

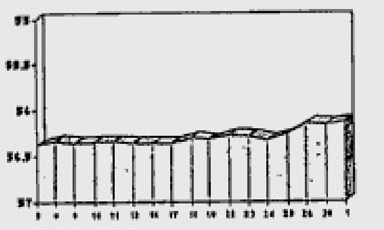
Earlier, Trade Secretary Cesar V. Purisima said the government wanted to raise as much as P200 billion for some 10 major infrastructure projects of which the PIC would be the proponent.

Purisima said there was a need to push for infrastructure projects but it was difficult to get investors to start them. "The establishment of the PIC is meant to jumpstart these projects."

INDICATORS

CURRENCIES

PESO-DOLLAR RATE



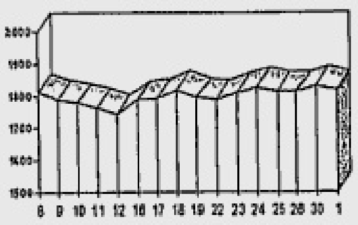
₱ 56.135 = $ 1
As of 5 p.m., Dec. 1, 2004

¥ 102.78 = $ 1
As of 5 p.m., Dec. 1, 2004

GOLD: $ 450.20-450.70
per ounce Hong Kong, Nov. 30, 2004

STOCK MARKET

Shares close 0.79% lower on profit-taking



(See stock market report on Page B2)

SHARE prices closed 0.79 percent lower yesterday as profit-taking set in a day after the market hit a seven-week high, dealers said.

With stocks overbought, investors immediately cashed in gains against the backdrop of high crude oil prices and a deadly storm that hit the northern Philippines, leaving nearly 500 people dead or missing and large areas flooded.

The Philippine Stock Exchange composite index fell 14.49 points to 1,816.47 after trading between 1,813.04 and 1,830.96.

Volume was 1.77 billion shares worth P2.43 billion after 922 million shares worth P928 million on Tuesday.

The broader all-shares index fell 16.96 points to 1,147.29.

Gainers led losers 28 to 27, with 49 stocks unchanged.

"Technically, most share prices have reached overbought levels. Today's fall was also a knee-jerk reaction to the impact of the devastating (storm)," said Astro del Castillo of First Grade Holdings.

The market ran into a technical correction after failing to break the 1,830-point resistance level, said Jose Vistan of AB Capital Securities.

"The 1,830 is a resistance level that needs to be re-tested. Had it gone beyond that level, the market should have continued its ascent," Vistan remarked.

Dealers said the series of tropical storms that recently hit the Philippines would most likely dampen agricultural output for the rest of the year and in the process slow economic growth.

JG Summit Holdings was the most actively traded stock, erasing earlier gains to close steady at P3.75.

Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. fell P5 to P1,360, tracking the fall of its New York-listed shares.

AFP

HGC okays sale of ₱20-B idle assets

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE BOARD of state-owned Home Guaranty Corp. has approved the disposal of at least P20 billion worth of idle pieces of property to free up cash for the government's priority shelter programs.

In an interview with the INQUIRER, HGC president Gonzalo Bongolan said the company's board had recently approved the terms of reference and bid-related documents as well as the selection criteria for the disposition.

He said the agency would tap a financial adviser to determine the best way of disposal—whether through a Special Purpose Vehicle framework, outright disposal outside the SPV, or joint venture.

The adviser would be given four to six months to study the assets and come up with a disposal strategy.

"Given the objective of monetizing assets to meet the requirements of the corporation, the first step is to classify the assets and the appropriate mode of disposition shall be executed after," Bongolan said.

"It's a drag administratively. We want to liquefy so we could focus more on guarantees," he said.

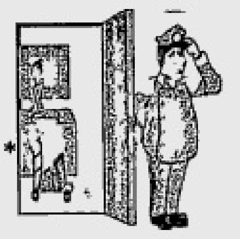
Created in 1950, HGC is

HGC/B2

INQUIRER MONITOR

Figures that matter in our nation's life

De luxe hotel occupancy rates*
(January to August 2004, in percent)



Rank	Hotel	Occupancy rate
1	New World Renaissance Hotel	83.71
2	Pan Pacific Manila	83.33
3	Mandarin Oriental Manila	80.60
4	Westin Philippine Plaza	77.35
5	Dusit Hotel Nikko	75.91
6	Hotel Intercontinental Manila	73.02
7	Holiday Inn Galleria	72.25
8	Makati Shangri-La Hotel	72.20
9	Heritage Hotel	70.98
10	Vivere Suites	70.57
11	Peninsula Manila Hotel	69.13
12	EDSA Shangri-La Hotel	65.49
13	Manila Diamond Hotel	64.19
14	Century Park Hotel	63.98
15	Bellevue Manila	62.95
16	Hyatt Regency Manila	55.91
17	Manila Hotel	39.74

*Based on a sample of the following classes of hotels: de luxe, 17; first class, 6; standard, 35 and economy, 11

Source: Department of Tourism

AT 69.71 percent, de luxe hotels got the highest average occupancy rate from January to August this year among hotels in Metro Manila followed by first class, 65.53 percent; standard, 63.44 percent and economy, 63.89 percent. Total occupancy rate for de luxe hotels, at 57.75 percent, was also higher compared to the same period last year.

Maricar D. Tolosa, PDI Research

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CAP's lack of license to sell discourages foreign investor

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

A FOREIGN investor who earlier expressed interest in extending a loan to embattled pre-need firm College Assurance Plan Philippines Inc. is having second thoughts due to concerns about the company's ability to renew its dealer's license.

CAP's license to sell education plans expired last Sept. 30. The SEC has so far not renewed the license pending CAP's completion of a plan to increase its capital.

SEC Chair Fe Barin said yesterday that Worthing Investments, a foreign funder from New York, has not come in because the SEC has yet to allow CAP to sell education and pension plans.

CAP said earlier that it reached an understanding with Worthing Investments, a foreign funder with an office in Hong Kong on a $127-million loan to help plug CAP's trust fund liabilities.

However, Barin said the company had told the SEC that there were new foreign investors coming in aside from Worthing Investments.

She also said that the regulator had allowed CAP to continue to operate because it was concerned about the ripple effects of shutting it down.

"It does not mean we are not concerned. But we are concerned about the industry and the planholders," Barin said.

Sources in CAP, however, could not immediately comment about Worthing Investments.

The SEC earlier questioned the pieces of property to be infused in CAP under a property-share swap, saying the titles to be transferred were "encumbered" or already owned by the government that were to be distributed to farmers under a land reform program, an official said.

The official said that the SEC has not accepted the property swap proposal because of the questionable titles.

However, the basis of such claim was a letter, signed only as from the "investing public", sent to the SEC alleging the land titles in Aurora and Quezon were not clean and were owned by the government through the Department of Agrarian Reform. These lands were the subject of certificate of land ownership awards (CLOA) and were transferred to farmer-beneficiaries.

The letter indicated that any entry on the foregoing titles was "spurious and fictitious" and asked the SEC to probe the titles.

CAP first vice president Bobby Café had said that CAP and the Fil-Estate group were working to remove the questionable titles from the offered land under its property for share swap proposal.

He added that CAP was trying to make sure that the encumbered titles were separated from the clean titles, which would leave 3000 hectares of clean land for swap with CAP shares.

Under a proposed property-for-shares swap, Green Circle Properties & Resources Inc. and Green Square Properties Corp. will subscribe to shares of CAP. They proposed to pay for the shares by assigning 3,000 hectares of property to CAP in Dingalan, Aurora.

Smart bucks Digitel rate proposal

By Clarissa S. Batino

SMART Communications Inc. has told the National Telecommunications Commission that adjusting the access charges with Digital Telecommunications Inc. would cause losses of more than P55 million in the first nine months.

The cash-rich subsidiary of Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. and the Gokongwei-owned Digitel had been locked in an interconnection dispute.

Smart, in its letter to the NTC, claimed that it had agreed to a 50-centavo increase per minute in the access charge slapped on calls originating from its network and terminating on Digitel's landline.

Digitel, as the terminating party, collects an access charge of P2.50 a minute from Smart, up from P2 before June 2003.

Smart said that in the first half, Digitel had proposed a new access rate scheme. It said the Gokongwei company wanted to further increase by 50 centavos a minute the calls from Smart to Digitel fixed-line.

On top of that, Digitel also wanted to reduce by 50 centavos to P4 a minute the access rate slapped by Smart on calls emanating from Digitel or its wireless brand Sun Cellular, according to Smart. Digitel had also proposed a similar cut on calls from Smart to Sun Cellular.

"Sometime in August 2004, Digitel/Sun unilaterally and without regard to its contractual obligations applied the new rate for April and May 2004 transactions," Smart told the NTC.

Digitel vice president William Pamintuan said that Smart had reduced its access charges to its affiliates and even to other telecom firms like Globe and Touch Mobile.

"As early as Jan. 26, 2004, Digitel sought to mutually implement the revised access charges with Smart effective/retroactive Jan. 1, just as Smart implemented the same with other PTEs effective/retroactive to said date," Pamintuan said in the company's reply to the NTC.

Smart said the lower access charge would cause a widening disparity between the termination rate and access charge with the Gokongwei firm. This, it said, would only encourage more bypass operators.

In its letter to the NTC, Smart noted that with the present rate, it earned P37.2 million on calls from Digitel and P323.1 million on calls from Sun Cellular.

HSBC ASIA-PACIFIC CEO IN MANILA.
HSBC Asia-Pacific CEO Mike Smith recently dialogued with members of the World Presidents' Organization–Philippine chapter (WPO) in an exclusive forum, where he spoke about the "Asian Renaissance," the relative importance of India and China amd how the Philippines can benefit from its proximity to these emerging markets. He is shown with former Finance Secretary Lito Camacho, a member of the Young Presidents' Organization, a WPO affiliate. Camacho was the panel moderator.

SMC confirms plan to acquire US, Australian food firms

FOOD and beverage conglomerate San Miguel Corp. yesterday confirmed that it was studying opportunities outside of the Asia-Pacific region in line with its expansion program.

"We will make the appropriate disclosure when definitive agreements are entered into," SMC said in a disclosure yesterday.

SMC has widened its horizon to include possible investments in the United States, a high-ranking company official earlier told the INQUIRER.

San Miguel is studying the acquisition of an American company with an annual turnover of $5 billion, the official said. It was also looking at an offshore company in Australia with a $1.5-billion annual revenue base, the official added.

"They are all in the food business," the official said, noting this was part of San Miguel's overseas expansion plan. San Miguel plotted its aggressive regional expansion last year after raising $540 million from the sale of 15 percent of the company to Japan's Kirin Brewery Ltd.

The plan was to put up new food and beverage plants in Thailand, Malaysia, Vietnam, Indonesia, Taiwan and southern China, mostly through joint venture agreements. San Miguel has plants and operations in China, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Vietnam and Australia.

It recently made inroads into Thailand and firmed up expansion plans in Malaysia. San Miguel earns only 15 percent of its revenues from overseas operations: four breweries in China and one each in Australia, Vietnam and Indonesia. *Elizabeth L. Sanchez*

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HGC okays sale of ₱20-B idle assets

From page B1

tasked to operate a credit-guarantee program to support government efforts to promote home owner ship. The HGC provides risk guarantees and fiscal incentives for housing credits extended by financing institutions, aiming to stimulate the flow of funds from both the government and private sectors for housing and urban development.

Bongolan said the agency had no particular preference for the SPV framework as a mode of disposition. However, he said there might be some pieces of property which would be suitable for disposition under the SPV mode.

The SPV Law intends to help banks and financial institutions get rid of their non-performing assets by waiving some of the taxes and reducing fees usually collected in the sale or transfer of assets. The law waived the documentary stamp tax, capital gains tax and e-VAT (expanded value-added tax) and likewise reduced the registration/transfer fees by 50 percent. The tax relief and other benefits are available only up to April 8, 2005.

The HGC chief said at least 15 companies—consisting of big auditing firms, investment banks, property firms and asset management companies—have submitted their letters of intent to obtain the mandate on the disposition program.

"We expect to come up with a shortlist by January and then award the mandate by March or April," he said.

The companies which had expressed an intention to bid for the mandate from HGC were: Bancommerce Investment Corp., Dale Strickland, Ernst & Young Transaction Advisory Services, Equity Managers Asia, First Metro Investment Corp., FS Dulalia Realty, KPMG Laya Mananghaya & Co., Leechiu & Associates, Metro Alliance Property Management Corp., PriceWaterhouseCoopers Financial Advisors, Philippine Commercial Capital Inc., Punongbayan & Araullo, Sea Consultants, The Property Forum Philippines, and Binswanger Philippines Inc.

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of December 1, 2004)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
BANKS & FINANCIAL SERVICES					
BANKS					
Asiatrust Dev. Bank Inc.	2.95	2.95	2.95	2.95	20,000
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	23.75	24	23.5	24	697,400
Bank of the Phil. Islands	50.5	50.5	49.5	49.5	286,900
China Banking Corp.	595	595	595	595	1,090
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	51.5	51.5	51	51	39,700
Export and Ind. Bank Inc.	0.45	0.49	0.45	0.48	4,960,000
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	29	29	28.5	28.5	29,400
Security Bank Corp.	26.5	27	26.5	27	42,000
Union Bank of the Phil.	23	23	22.75	23	30,700
FINANCIAL SERVICES					
Manulife Financial Corp.	2500	2500	2495	2500	350
PCI Leasing & Fin. Inc.	1.36	1.36	1.34	1.34	564,000
Sun Life Financial Inc.	1810	1810	1785	1785	250
COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL					
COMMUNICATION					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	18.75	18.75	18.75	18.75	27,300
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	1.9	1.9	1.8	1.82	34,457,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	980	990	980	985	18,840
Ipeople Inc.	2.9	2.95	2.85	2.9	127,000
Island Info and Tech Inc.	0.044	0.045	0.044	0.045	1,500,000
ISM Communications Corp.	0.033	0.034	0.033	0.034	1,300,000
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	2.6	2.85	2.6	2.65	29,036,000
Phil. Telegraph & Tel. Co	0.37	0.37	0.36	0.36	60,000
Transpacific Broadcast	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4	25,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	1360	1360	1350	1360	634,110
Ivantage Corp.	0.77	0.8	0.77	0.8	11,190,000
Philweb Corp.	0.012	0.012	0.011	0.012	55,700,000
POWER & ENERGY					
Manila Electric Co. A	15.75	15.75	15.75	15.75	43,200
Manila Electric Co. B	25	25	24.75	24.75	625,400
Petron Corp.	3.25	3.3	3.2	3.25	1,015,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	1.06	1.06	1.06	1.06	96,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	5.8	5.8	5.8	5.8	1,237,000
Lorenzo Shipping Corp.	1.08	1.14	1.08	1.14	340,000
CONSTRUCTION & OTHER RELATED PRODUCTS					
Engineering Equip. Inc.	0.36	0.36	0.36	0.36	330,000
Republic Cement Corp.	0.62	0.62	0.62	0.62	50,000
Union Cement Corp.	2.16	2.18	2.14	2.14	1,306,000
FOOD, BEVERAGES & TOBACCO					
Alaska Milk Corp.	2.95	3	2.95	3	76,000
Ginebra San Miguel Inc.	31	31.5	31	31.5	301,000
Jollibee Foods Corp.	29	29	28.5	28.5	424,700
RFM Corp.	0.69	0.69	0.69	0.69	20,000
San Miguel Corp. A	56.5	57	56.5	57	48,600
San Miguel Corp. B	74	74	73.5	73.5	263,000
Universal Robina Corp.	9.8	9.9	9.8	9.9	145,000
Vitarich Corp.	0.29	0.29	0.29	0.29	150,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Abacus Con Res & Hdg A	0.004	0.004	0.004	0.004	7,000,000
Ayala Corp.	6.4	6.4	6.3	6.4	15,760,000
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	3.2	3.2	3.2	3.2	5,609,000
Alliance Global Group Inc.	11	11	11	11	200
Ajo.Net Holdings Inc.	0.023	0.023	0.023	0.023	1,000,000
A. Soriano Corp.	1.58	1.58	1.56	1.58	600,000
APC Group Inc.	0.055	0.055	0.055	0.055	100,000
Alcorn Gold Res. Corp.	0.007	0.007	0.007	0.007	6,000,000
Bacnotan Cons Indus Inc.	16	16	16	16	2,700
Benpres Holdings Corp.	0.7	0.7	0.69	0.69	10,180,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.26	0.26	0.25	0.26	1,500,000
Southeast Asian Cement	0.125	0.125	0.125	0.125	300,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	3.8	3.85	3.8	3.85	2,546,000
Filinvest Dev. Corp.	0.95	0.95	0.95	0.95	50,000
Fil-Hispano Holdings Corp.	4.75	5	4.75	4.85	4,168,000
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	27	27.5	27	27.5	70,500
Ionics Inc.	1.48	1.48	1.46	1.46	232,000
J.G. Summit Holdings Inc.	3.75	4	3.75	3.75	241,862,000
Macroasia Corp.	1.36	1.46	1.36	1.44	1,771,000
Marsteel Cons. Inc. B	0.014	0.015	0.014	0.015	1,200,000
Megaworld Corp.	1.26	1.26	1.2	1.2	5,592,000
Multitech Inv. Corp.	0.4	0.42	0.4	0.4	150,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.42	0.42	0.4	0.42	13,590,000
Polar Property Holdings	2.38	2.38	2.38	2.38	10,000
Prime Orion Phils. Inc.	0.15	0.15	0.15	0.15	10,000
South China Resources Inc.	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	30,000
Seafront Resources Corp.	0.21	0.21	0.21	0.21	20,000
Waterfront Phils. Inc.	0.185	0.185	0.18	0.18	2,450,000
MANUFACTURING, DISTRIBUTION & TRADING					
Music Semiconductors Corp.	1.62	1.62	1.62	1.62	2,000
Mabuhay Vinyl Corp.	0.94	0.94	0.94	0.94	50,000
HOTEL, RECREATION & OTHER SERVICES					
Belle Corp.	0.6	0.61	0.59	0.59	2,700,000
Fairmont Holdings Inc.	1.04	1.08	0.95	0.95	4,339,000
Leisure & Resorts Corp.	0.68	0.69	0.63	0.63	850,000
Premiere Ent. Prod. Inc.	0.35	0.35	0.31	0.31	370,000
BONDS, PREFERRED & WARRANTS					
ABS-CBN Hldgs. Corp.(Pdr)	18.5	19	18.5	18.75	1,017,600
PLDT (10% Pref) Series T	10.25	10.25	10.25	10.25	200
PLDT (10% Pref) Series W	10.25	10.25	10.25	10.25	700
PLDT 10% Pref Series Aa	10.25	10.25	10.25	10.25	600
OTHERS					
Centro Escolar University	7.6	7.6	7.6	7.6	2,000
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	7.1	7.1	7.1	7.1	4,994,000
Cebu Holdings Inc.	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	1,500,000
C&P Homes Inc.	0.28	0.28	0.28	0.28	8,770,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.13	0.13	0.13	0.13	60,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.34	0.34	0.34	0.34	4,270,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	1.1	1.1	1.08	1.08	3,580,000
Fil-Estate Land Inc.	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	2,650,000
Phil Realty and Holdings	0.24	0.24	0.235	0.24	1,060,000
SM Development Corp.	1.44	1.44	1.34	1.34	466,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	7.6	7.6	7.4	7.5	14,274,000
MINING					
Abra Mining & Industrial	0.012	0.013	0.012	0.013	594,800,000
Atlas Cons. Min & Dev't	3.4	3.5	3.4	3.5	30,000
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.225	0.23	0.225	0.23	8,000,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co B	0.28	0.28	0.28	0.28	1,800,000
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.018	0.019	0.018	0.019	224,500,000
Manila Mining Corp. B	0.024	0.025	0.024	0.025	372,200,000
Omico Corp.	0.0044	0.0046	0.0044	0.0046	47,000,000
Philex Mining Corp. A	0.43	0.43	0.43	0.43	1,100,000
Philex Mining Corp. B	0.51	0.51	0.51	0.51	1,190,000
OIL					
Imperial Res.	0.011	0.011	0.01	0.011	9,900,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.0044	0.0044	0.0044	0.0044	30,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. B	0.0044	0.0044	0.0044	0.0044	4,000,000
Pacifica	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	15,000,000
Petroenergy Res. Corp.	2.6	2.6	2.55	2.55	124,000

DISCLOSURES

VITARICH Corp. appointed Ernesto del Valle Arceo Jr. assistant corporate secretary, officer-in-charge and compliance officer, effective Dec. 1.

* * *

ERIBERTO Gesalta, first vice president of Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co., disposed of 500 PLDT shares at P1,380 on Nov. 24, and another 500 shares at P1,390 on Nov. 30.

* * *

JUN Florencio, first vice president of PLDT, disposed of 1,800 shares at P1,380 on Nov. 26.

* * *

UNIVERSAL Rightfield Property Holdings Inc. said it has not received any notice from the Securities and Exchange Commission regarding the revocation of its registration.

* * *

SAN MIGUEL Corp. confirmed it was studying investment opportunities overseas, in line with its expansion program.

* * *

RIZAL Commercial Banking Corp. appointed Horacio Cebreri III senior vice president/ deputy group head of financial management, Emma Reyes-Pante, first vice president/ group head of corporate planning and corporate information officer, effective Dec. 1. ***Compiled by D.J. Yap, PDI Research***

CURRENCIES

December 1, 2004 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.752162	1.000000	56.1610
Japan	Yen	0.007312	0.009721	0.5459
United Kingdom	Pound	1.437458	1.911100	107.3293
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.096712	0.128579	7.2211
Switzerland	Franc	0.659792	0.877193	49.2640
Canada	Dollar	0.634308	0.843313	47.3613
Singapore	Dollar	0.459392	0.610762	34.3010
Australia	Dollar	0.582169	0.773994	43.4683
Bahrain	Dinar*	1.995232	2.652661	148.9761
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.200577	0.266667	14.9763
Brunei	Dollar	0.457993	0.608902	34.1965
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000083	0.000111	0.0062
Thailand	Baht	0.019095	0.025387	1.4258
UAE	Dirham	0.204821	0.272309	15.2931
Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.329500	74.6660
Argentina	Peso	0.255187	0.339271	19.0538
Brazil	Real	0.276327	0.367377	20.6323
Denmark	Kroner	0.134589	0.178936	10.0492
India	Rupee	0.016914	0.022487	1.2629
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.197964	0.263193	14.7812
Mexico	New Peso	0.067067	0.089166	5.0077
New Zealand	Dollar	0.537489	0.714592	40.1322
Norway	Kroner	0.122672	0.163092	9.1594
Pakistan	Rupee	0.012609	0.016764	0.9415
South Africa	Rand	0.130469	0.173458	9.7416
Korea	Won	0.000718	0.000954	0.0536
Sweden	Kroner	0.112011	0.148918	8.3634
Syria	Pound	0.014506	0.019286	1.0831
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.023359	0.031056	1.7441
Venezuela	Bolivar	0.000393	0.000522	0.0293

Solon calls for 7% tax on telcos

By Clarissa S. Batino

THE VICE chair of the House ways and means committee is set to file today a bill calling for the charging of a 7-percent excise tax on telecommunications companies for using the airwaves.

The bill will replace the earlier proposal of Rep. Danilo Suarez to revive the franchise tax.

Suarez said that the proposed excise tax on using the airwaves would bring in an additional P10 billion in government revenue.

"I am refining my earlier proposal to revive the franchise tax because it occurred to me that when we talk of franchise tax, it would be slapped on all companies holding a franchise, when we are only targeting the telecommunications industry," said Suarez in an interview.

The solon said a tax on the use of the airwaves would be more specific to the telecommunications sector, unlike the franchise tax.

"They should be slapped an excise tax on the use of the broad spectrum of the frequency," said Suarez.

Suarez had been after telecommunications companies on grounds that they were "making so much money."

Globe Telecom Inc. and Smart Communications Inc. have been posting hefty income numbers.

Globe's profits, however, dropped 34 percent to P2.05 billion during the third quarter against the same period last year.

Smart's sales hit P18 billion in the first nine months.

The solon earlier led moves to impose a tax on text messaging, but public clamor against the proposed law stalled its progress.

Suarez also claimed that wireless phone giants were making between P7 billion and 10 billion in revenue each year out of drop calls and network inefficiency at the expense of millions of prepaid subscribers.

"This is even a very conservative estimate because I think a fourth of the current subscriber base could be suffering from at least a drop call each day," Suarez said earlier.

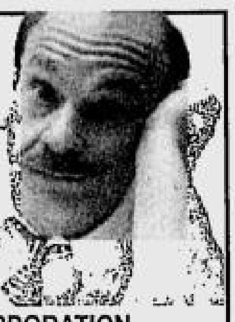
Drop calls refer to those that are terminated by the network but are believed to be charged against the subscriber.

Suarez said these were caused by network weakness and usually victimized subscribers taking calls in moving vehicles.

Telecommunications firms said they did not have an estimate of the extent of the drop calls, but said the solon's numbers were exaggerated.

Telco executives are expected to oppose the latest Suarez bill as they had the earlier proposal on the franchise tax.

They said they were more amenable to increasing the value added tax rate.



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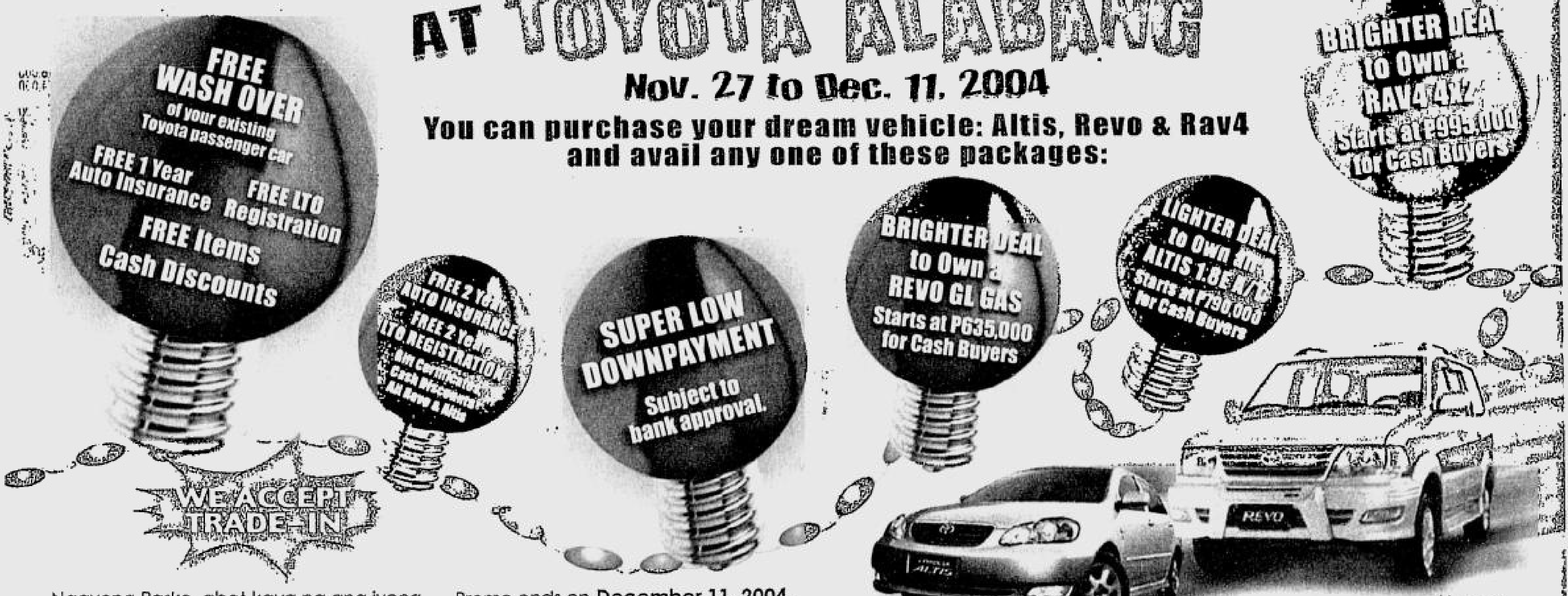

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CENTER FOR BRIDGING SOCIETAL DIVIDES

In Mindanao, hope springs for tomorrow's leaders

By Abigail L. Ho

TRADITIONAL theories on how to bring about societal change, restore the peace and give the residents the much needed help to get their lives back on track do not usually work in strife-torn Mindanao.

The need for a leader who could bridge the "societal divide" and bring about change became so strong that Mirant Philippines Corp. and the Asian Institute of Management teamed up to train such people.

CORPORATE CITIZEN

Thus, the AIM-Mirant Center for Bridging Societal Divides was born.

Unlike any of Mirant's numerous corporate social responsibility programs, the leadership center is focused on breaching the gap between cultures and society classes to create lasting peace in a place where violence has become part of day-to-day life.

Mindanao first

Launched last February, the AIM-Mirant Center will focus specifically on Mindanao. Its initial years will be devoted to creating techniques that will develop and strengthen deep, lasting collaborative relationships among the diverse peoples of the island.

While other Asian economies have made great strides toward progress, parts of Mindanao continue to suffer the sting of an unstable economy due to constant threats to security.

As a result, employment and livelihood opportunities remain scarce, mortality rates are high, and control over the area's resources is severely lacking. Poverty incidence is high while the gap between the rich and the poor continues to expand.

The Center is under no illusion that it can come up with overnight solutions to the Mindanao problem. Rather, it is working hard to come up with practical, sustainable answers.

"The establishment of the Center for Bridging Societal Divides cannot be more timely and relevant," said Edgardo Bautista, Mirant Philippines president and chief executive. "Since the Center seeks to address problems of long standing, it is right that this endeavor is for the long-term by looking at and addressing the seeds of misunderstanding."

SULU leaders sign up to participate in one of the programs of the AIM-Mirant Center for Bridging Societal Divides. Held in Davao City last August, the workshop brought together 45 provincial and local officials in a bid to hone their leadership skills.

MINDANAO development workers listen to a speaker discussing the ways and means to help the people in the strife-torn island.

Moving toward the goal

To be able to achieve its objectives, the Center has an established program of activities that involve different facets of solutions formulation. These include the development of learning materials, a training program, the establishment of a knowledge database and the creation of a "bridging leaders" network.

The materials to be developed in the Center include framework papers, readings, teaching notes and cases chronicling different experiences under the Bridging Societal Divides program.

Various training programs will also be set up, utilizing learning materials on such themes as governance, poverty reduction, empowering the marginalized sector and many other topics relevant to the Center's thrust of bridging the societal divide.

Case studies on various issues, sectors and scope will likewise be used in the training courses.

The AIM will also handpick certain institutions that will serve as "hubs" for the program. From these institutions will come potential trainers for the program who will then train interested participants.

Within the training program, a mentoring program will also be established to help develop individuals who will serve as "Bridging Leaders" in the future.

There will also be a repository of data, or a knowledge bank, which will include a compilation of Internet sites containing current trends and issues on bridging the societal divide. All intellectual capital churned out by the Center will be deposited in this database.

But, of course, all the training and studying will be of little use if the pulse of the people will not be known. Issue-based dialogues will then be conducted with stakeholders to find out how all these studies and training can be used in real-life situations to help effect positive changes in Mindanao and other places in the coming years.

When all the necessary information and training have been gathered and conducted, a pool of leaders and organizations will be developed. They will then serve as the source of new programs and ideas taking the Bridging Societal Divides concept a step further.

A new kind of leader

All these have been designed to ensure that a new breed of leaders will emerge—leaders who will be capable of effecting just the right kind of changes to raise Mindanao from the ashes and make it economically whole again.

According to Mirant's Bautista, only a special kind of leader can fit the bill.

"It is correct to develop a new kind of leadership to solve the inequalities and structural weaknesses that give rise to conflicts," he said. "The traditional type of leaders, schooled in the theory and models of the West and urban centers, had not been so effective in the hinterlands and among the poor.

"We must grow a new type of leader, one who has the bridging qualities and the harmonizing skills that we need. To do this, we must understand better how to discover that kind of a leader, how to nurture him, and replicate his kind."

And this, precisely, is why the AIM-Mirant Center has come about—to give rise to the new breed of leaders who can put an end to the sufferings of many in conflict-ridden Mindanao.

BOI: 74% of total investments are energy-related

By Abigail L. Ho

AMID growing concerns of a power shortfall four to five years from now, energy-related investments dominated the Board of Investments' list of registered investment commitments in the first three quarters, accounting for 74 percent of the total amount committed during that period.

Citing BOI data, Energy Secretary Vincent Perez said power sector-related investment commitments reached P109.96 billion in the first nine months of the year, or 74 percent of the P148.22-billion total.

The registered power projects include GNPower Ltd. Co.'s proposed 1,200-megawatt (MW) liquefied natural gas (LNG) plant in Bataan, Northwind Power Development Corp.'s 25-MW wind power facility in Bangui Bay, Ilocos Norte, and San Carlos Wind Power Corp.'s 30-MW wind power facility in San Carlos City, Negros Occidental.

Government-owned or controlled corporation Philippine National Oil Co. Energy Development Corp. also had two registered projects in the January-September period, both geothermal in nature. These were the 54-MW plant in Bago City, Negros Occidental and the 26-MW plant in Palinpinon, Negros Oriental.

"The country's power demand has been steadily going up as indicated by the 4.56-percent growth in energy sales of (the National Power Corp.)," Perez said in a statement. "The country's largest power distribution company, (Manila Electric Co.), also posted a 3.8-percent increase (in sales) for the three quarters this year."

He cited the threat of a power shortfall and explained that the energy sector, particularly the generation aspect, needed more new investments in the coming years.

The BOI-registered power projects, Perez said, had been lined up under the the updated Philippine Power Development Plan as indicative projects.

The updated PDP shows that by 2008 the Luzon grid will need 150 MW in new capacity. Another 1,050 MW and 1,650 MW of new capacity will have to be installed by 2009 and 2010.

In the Visayas grid, 255 MW of capacity has already been committed between 2005 and 2008. However, this still fell short of the 2008 demand forecast by 100 MW.

As the planning, designing, construction and commissioning of a power plant took around three to four years, Perez said, "work must be done now to avoid any problems in the future."

Looming 24-hour blackouts seen to result in daily losses of P2B

THE GOVERNMENT should accelerate the sale of the National Power Corp.'s generation assets, the removal of cross-subsidies and the introduction of the wholesale electricity spot market if it wants to prevent 24-hour nationwide blackouts that could result in losses of up to P2 billion a day.

In a recent speech before members of the Institute of Integrated Electrical Engineers, Senate President Franklin Drilon said that while reforms were already being carried out under Republic Act No. 9136 or the Electric Power Industry Reform Act of 2001 (Epira), some ongoing reform efforts would have to be accelerated so as to further develop the local power sector.

Drilon pointed out that these specific items on the power sector reform agenda were of utmost importance in spurring economic growth in the longer term.

"To achieve economic development, we must address and forestall an impending power crisis," Drilon said. "This is a very important area to focus on because of its huge potential to severely harm our economy.

"We will be losing millions of dollars in possible foreign investments. In case of a 24-hour nationwide blackout, the Department of Energy estimates the economy would lose up to P2 billion a day."

As it would took around four to five years to plan, design, construct and commission a power plant, Drilon said that now was the right time to attract investors to invest in the local power sector.

It would take investments of up to $3 billion in the next five years in the generation sector alone to prevent rotating brownouts expected in 2007 or 2008, he said.

More new players could mean more affordable power rates in the future, Drilon added. This would not only do the country's economy much good, but it would also help ease the cost burdens of the Filipino consumers.

Lower power rates, particularly in the industrial sector, would likewise make the Philippines more globally competitive, he said.

The country currently had one of the highest power rates in the region, thus discouraging investors from bringing their businesses here, he said.

To help encourage investors to locate here, Drilon said the removal of cross-subsidies would have to be accelerated.

"To improve our regional industrial competitiveness, we have to lower the ratio of industrial power rates to residential rates from 80 percent to around 60 percent, which is the average in other countries and closer to Korea, which is 50 percent," Drilon said.

Abigail L. Ho

Destiny to invest ₱250M for '05 expansion

By Clarissa S. Batino

SHAREHOLDERS of Destiny Cable Inc. are planning to infuse about P250 million into the company to expand its operations starting next year, a top official said.

Destiny Cable, controlled by Elena Lim of the Solid Group, has merged with Global Cable Inc. owned by Filipino and Taiwanese investors. The two firms have consolidated as Destiny Cable.

Destiny Cable president Philip Jean said the company would roll out 250,000 lines in 2005 to connect into more homes. It would also complete an underground facility in Ortigas and start shifting into set-up boxes in some areas to help prevent theft.

The cable firm has started producing its own shows to provide more value-added service to its customers, he added.

In February, the company would launch Global Destiny Basketball League on its channel 3, a first-of-its-kind cable-produced sports league in the country, according to Jean.

Destiny Cable estimates that, together with Global, it has about 70,000 paying subscribers in the whole of Metro Manila and Metro Cebu.

Jean said the company was cleaning up its system and getting rid of about 150,000 illegal connections. Theft is a major problem of cable operators and a reason why the likes of Destiny had not been profitable.

"The shareholders are planning an infusion of about P250 million next year which we would use for the expansion program," said Jean. The merger of Destiny Cable and Global Cable was approved by the Securities and Exchange Commission in October.

Jean said the merger of the systems and the books of Destiny and Global should be completed in six months. Destiny is the surviving entity because its license provides it with a wider scope of operations.

With the expansion, Destiny Cable would like to add at least 20,000 new subscribers. The official said the company has to hit 200,000 subscribers to make its operations more viable.

Destiny currently charges P450 a month for 80 channels. Jean said this amount was more affordable compared to the P750 that its competitors charge.

He said the company was planning to produce more shows so it could offer more channels.

The basketball league for boys aged 16 and below would be an intercity competition. Jean said 120 teams have committed to join from 10 cities in Metro Manila.

"Destiny is setting aside more than P12 million to produce the league," he noted. "We take charge of the uniforms and the cash prizes for the champions. We are also getting a lot of support from the local governments."

DOF, BSP cited for RP's strong performance

By Michelle V. Remo

THE NATIONAL Economic and Development Authority has credited the performance of the country's fiscal and monetary sectors for the relatively high economic growth in the first three quarters of the year, despite lingering problems on the government's huge budget deficit and ballooning debt.

The government earlier announced that the country's gross domestic product grew by 6.3 percent in the third quarter, and by an average of 6.5 percent in the first three quarters of the year. The figures were much higher than the government's full-year target of only 4.9 to 5.8 percent.

Neda Director General Romulo Neri said the ability of the national government to stay on track of its fiscal targets for the period allowed a modest increase in capital spending and to meet interest payment obligations.

"Underpinning the growth is sound economic management," Neri said in a statement. "On the macroeconomic front, fiscal targets are on track, with revenues up by 14.8 percent in the third quarter compared with a low growth of 4.3 percent in the same period last year."

The national government's budget deficit, a result of lower revenue and higher expenditure, for the first 10 months of the year stood at P147.726 billion. The figure was 9.85 percent lower than the P163.874 billion recorded during the same period last year.

The latest deficit figure was a result of the P576.971 billion in revenue collection and P724.697 billion in expenditure. The amount of revenue collection was 12.5 percent higher than a year ago.

Neri, who is also the country's economic planning secretary, said the economic growth during the first three quarters of the year was boosted by the interest-rate policy of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP).

He said the BSP's decision not to follow the US Federal Reserve in increasing interest rates helped prevent real interest rates from shooting up. The stable interest-rate environment boosted the real estate and construction sector, which is now reportedly on the rise after suffering blows brought about by the 1997 Asian financial crisis.

Although the Neda found the performance of the Department of Finance, which is in charge of fiscal matters of the state, and the BSP commendable, credit rating agencies and multilateral lenders are closely watching the government's budget and credit performance.

Credit rating agencies have threatened to downgrade the Philippines' credit rating if none of the Arroyo administration's proposed revenue-raising measures would be passed before the end of the year.

The measures, which include increases in some taxes and reduction in fiscal incentives, are expected to generate about P80 billion in annual revenue to achieve the goal of wiping out the budget deficit.

The national government's debt has already reached P3.5 trillion as of the first half of the year. Debt is the amount of accumulated borrowings that the government has incurred to address the budget deficits in the past years.

Taking into account the average growth in the first three quarters of the year, Neda officials are expecting the 2004 gross domestic product to exceed 6 percent.

Oil slumps $1 as US winter stocks seen rising

NEW YORK—Oil prices fell $1 on Tuesday as an expected increase in US heating fuel supplies eased concerns over an inventory crunch should this winter's weather prove colder than normal.

New York crude futures dropped $1.01 to $48.75 a barrel, reversing an earlier rally that had brought prices over $50 due to production problems from oil fields in the North Sea and Eastern Canada.

London Brent crude fell 76 cents to $44.99 a barrel.

The heavy losses near the end of the open call session in New York came as analysts anticipated the second straight weekly increase in US distillates supplies, which include heating oil and diesel.

Such an increase would help the world's largest energy consumer to whittle down a 16 percent year-on-year heating oil inventory deficit ahead of peak winter demand.

Government inventory data due on Wednesday is expected to show overall US distillate inventories rose by 1.4 million barrels in the week to Nov. 26, helped by recent mild weather in the Northeast that has capped demand, a Reuters survey of 12 analysts showed.

Even with that build, distillate stocks would remain well below last year and forecasts for colder-than-usual weather in the months ahead are keeping the market on edge.

"Winter will play a big part," said analyst Kevin Norrish of Barclays Capital. "Let's face it, we have not yet reached the seasonal peak for winter demand."

Prices have risen by around 50 percent since January and are less than $7 off a record high hit in late October, buoyed by fears that winter fuel stocks are too low in the US as well as key consumers in Asia and Europe.

Saudi Oil Minister Ali al-Naimi said on Monday that while global stocks of petroleum products such as heating oil remained below par, inventories were rebuilding and crude output was running slightly ahead of demand.

The dollar's fall to record lows last week has also raised unease in Opec nations as their petrodollar revenues will be worth less in the eurozone and Asia.

Opec's second largest producer Iran believes Opec should crack down on excess output over self-imposed quotas when ministers meet in Cairo on Dec. 10.

Other Opec members are generally reluctant to advocate an output cut but that could change as any stock build gathers momentum early next year, analysts said. *Reuters*

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Lopsided world growth may aggravate US deficit

WASHINGTON/PARIS—Global economic growth remains tilted toward the United States as a picture of fourth-quarter activity starts to form with European and Japanese economies stumbling on high energy prices and currency rates.

A slew of economic reports from around the world on Tuesday showed a resilient consumer-driven US economy continuing to outpace the still export-dependent and weaker economies of the euro zone and Japan.

But this persistent imbalance within an upbeat overall global outlook risks aggravating already huge US trade and current account deficits even further, economists reckon.

The concern is a vicious circle develops. Rising deficits risk steepening the decline of the dollar, already down 8 percent against the euro and 7 percent on the yen since the start of October, and squeezing Europe and Japan further.

"Given these growth differentials, the US current account deficit could widen even further next year if anything—perhaps to 6 to 7 percent of GDP," said Ian Morris, chief US economist at HSBC in New York.

The International Monetary Fund forecasts the US current account deficit—a broad measure of the country's international account in trade and investments—to reach $631 billion this year, or 5.4 percent of gross domestic product.

This gap has been increasingly financed by Asian central banks—such as Japan and China—who continually buy dollars and dollar assets just to keep their currencies down and exports to the US competitive.

A consumer-driven upward revision to US third-quarter gross domestic product statistics on Tuesday boosted optimism about the US economy into the end of the year.

The Commerce Department said gross domestic product, the measure of all goods and services produced within US borders, grew at a 3.9-percent annual pace in the July-September quarter, up from 3.7 percent estimated a month ago.

Although other news of a drop in US consumer confidence this month tempered that enthusiasm, data on Midwest manufacturing in November was also more buoyant than many had expected and the employment picture there remained bright.

The US reports contrasted with earlier news of waning demand for Japanese electronics exports and sliding euro zone business confidence.

The combination of record oil prices and rising exchange rates is taking a toll there, economists said.

Japanese data showed a surprise drop in industry output in October and a November survey of manufacturers showed that foreign orders for Japanese goods, notably Chinese demand, had wilted for the first time since mid-2003.

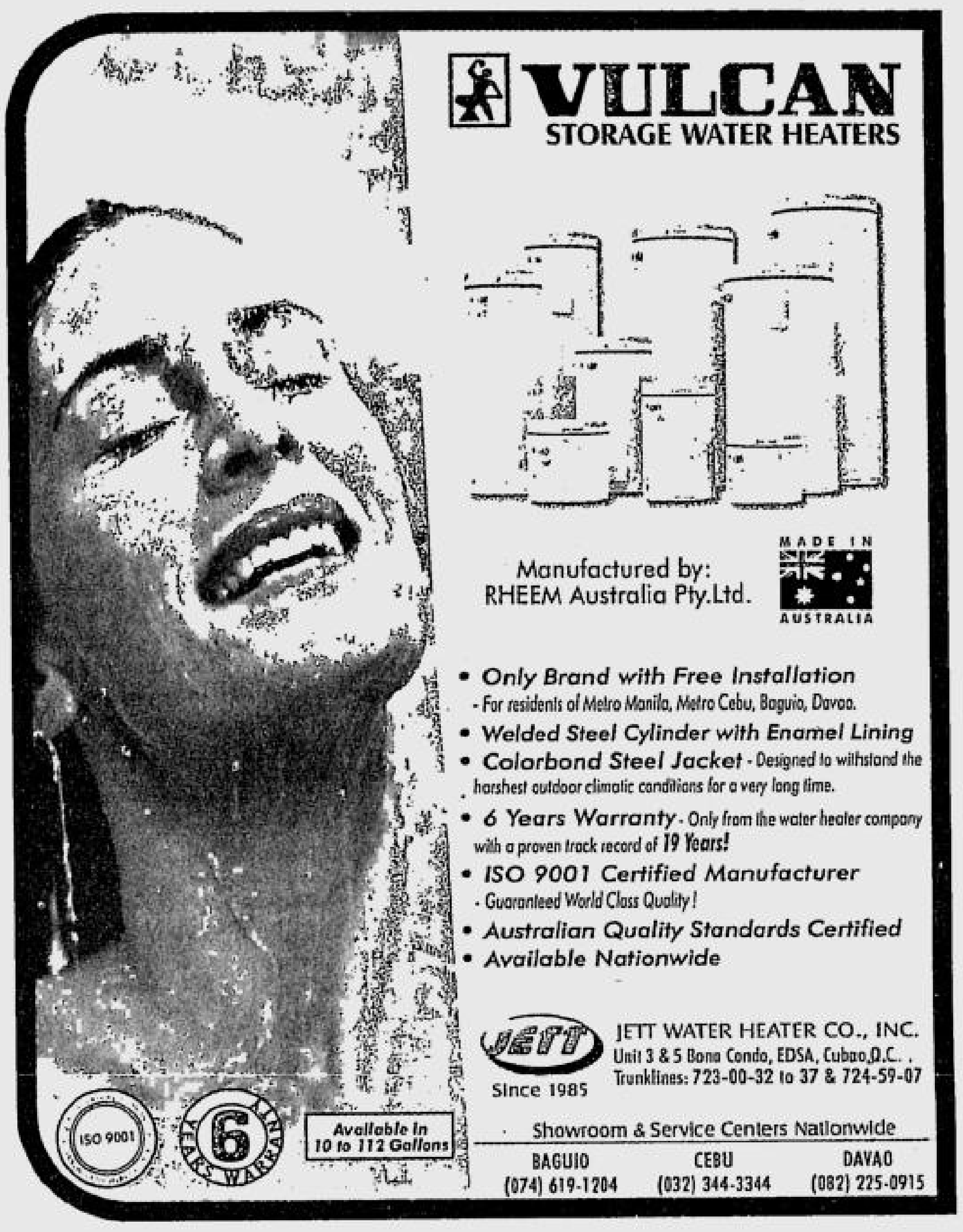
In the euro zone, the European Commission in Brussels said in a monthly update that economic sentiment slid to a 4-month low in November and that its separate index on the business climate hit a 6-month low.

Earlier, the Paris-based Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development forecast growth of 3.6 percent this year for the 30 countries of the OECD and 2.9 in 2005 before a recovery to 3.1 in 2006.

For the 12-nation euro zone, marked above all by depressed German household spending, it trimmed its already low growth forecasts to 1.8 percent this year and 1.9 percent next, from 2.0 and 2.4 percent previously.

The OECD edged its US forecast marginally upwards to 4.4 percent for this year and lowered it to 3.3 percent from 3.7 percent for next year, and cut Japan's growth outlook to 4.0 percent from 4.4 this year and to 2.1 from 2.8 for 2005.

Jean-Philippe Cotis, the OECD's chief economist, put most of the changes down to the same thing, a surge in world oil prices to over $50 a barrel in the third quarter, leaving them more than 50 percent higher than the start of the year. *Reuters*



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Exports drive up Hyundai sales

SEOUL—Hyundai Motor Co., South Korea's top auto maker, registered a 20-percent jump in November vehicle sales, as booming demand for its Santa Fe SUV and mid-sized sedan Sonata powered exports to Europe and China.

Hyundai, a rising star on the world auto market, is expected to see good volume and market share growth in the months ahead as new models lure more buyers, analysts have said.

Investors are also eager to see how Hyundai's new flagship, NF Sonata, fares next year in the crucial US market, particularly since the company faces a rising won currency, stagnant local demand and gloomier prospects for the global economy.

Moody's Investors Service upgraded its ratings on Hyundai and affiliate Kia Motors Corp. last week, citing improving overall earnings and credit profile.

Hyundai's revenue growth has been strengthened by successful model renewal and export sales, and Moody's expected this trend to continue.

Hyundai Motor, which controls half the home market, sold 223,698 vehicles in November against 186,511 units a year ago.

Exports rose 27.5 percent to 175,194 units from 137,456 a year earlier, while domestic sales fell one percent to 48,504 units from 49,055 units.

Exports were strong across the board, with Europe and China taking the lead, a Hyundai spokesperson said on Wednesday.

Sales in the key US and growing India markets were also robust, he added.

"The company continued its march of record monthly sales, helped by rocketing exports and aggressive marketing in the home market," said Hyundai spokesperson Park Sang-woo.

Investors hope the NF Sonata will do for Hyundai what the Camry did for Japan's No. 1 carmaker, Toyota Motor Corp.

The Camry was Toyota's first car sold in volume globally and helped catapult the Japanese firm to No. 2 in the world.

The NF Sonata will compete with the Camry and Honda Motor Co.'s Accord.

Hyundai hopes to crank out 5 million cars a year along with Kia Motors to become a global top five carmaker by 2010.

Shares in Hyundai Motor have come under pressure recently, hit by worries over a shortage of steel plates and a stronger won. *Reuters*

A ROLLS-ROYCE 100EX experimental motor car is unveiled by Gary Wong (right), director of Rolls-Royce Motor Cars Hong Kong and China, and Colin Kelly, regional director of Rolls-Royce Motor Cars, Asia Pacific, during a press preview to mark the company's 100th anniversary at a Hong Kong hotel on Tuesday. The car is the first experimental motor car produced by Rolls-Royce since the 1950s. AP

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November 2004

Asean is trade group with political issues, experts say

VIENTIANE—The 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) emerged from its summit in Laos as a hugely ambitious economic group with a serious political problem, analysts said.

While delegates waxed almost lyric about trade deals criss-crossing the region, they were prosaically quiet on the oppression of democracy in Burma, tied by a vow not to interfere in other members' internal affairs.

"Although in the past two years, they appear to have made progress on non-interference, at this meeting Asean actually seems to have moved backward rather than forward," said Hiro Katsumata, an Asean expert at Singapore's Nanyang Technological University.

"If Asean fails to address the issue, it will hurt its reputation and image as a legitimate international organization," he said.

This intrinsic contradiction in the group's setup was hardly mentioned at the summit in the Laotian capital of Vientiane, itself not a shining example of democracy with its strictly controlled press and one-party rule.

Agreements were signed with China to establish the world's largest free-trade bloc by 2010, and similar deals were mulled with Japan, India, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand.

"While a less frenetic pace of development may indeed be preferable, it is probably the case that Asean has little alternative in the current economic climate," said Mark Rolls, a scholar at New Zealand's Waikato University.

Regional trade blocs are mushrooming throughout the global economy, and Asean also has to come up with a response to the growing might of China.

But while Asean is expanding in a geographic sense, there is no vision of ever-tighter integration among its existing members.

"There has never been any intention since Asean's inception that it should aim for a EU-style entity," said Rolls.

"Asean was founded on a declaration, and not a treaty, and it has always been inter-governmental, eschewing any notion of supra-national," he said.

That is one reason why non-interference and non-intervention have been lasting principles of the organization ever since its birth in 1967.

Member nations can fret about rights abuses like the Myanmar junta's decision to extend democracy icon Aung San Suu Kyi's house arrest for another year, and some of them did.

But the organization has no mechanism to force a member to change its ways, a problem that is likely to be exposed to the whole world little more than a year from now when Burma, globally reviled, takes the chair of the group.

Having the generals of Yangon act as Asean's external face could pose a major obstacle in the organization's dealing with for instance Europe throughout 2006.

But it is less likely to be seriously detrimental to the Asean states' relations with one another or with Northeast Asian states, according to Alice Ba, an international relations professor at the University of Delaware.

"Their governments tend to be more understanding of the significance of non-interference to intra-regional relations, or at least find the implications of non-interference less problematic," she said.

"If current economic trends in East Asia continue and if China remains stable, Western criticism of Asean on this question will also matter less," she said.

Asean itself is changing in subtle ways to address rights abuses and other domestic issues among its members, said Juergen Haacke, an international relations lecturer at the London School of Economics.

"If the question is, 'Are they finding ways to communicate their points of view to one another?', the answer is 'yes'," he said.

"But if the question is, 'Can they enforce their respective ideas for resolving particular domestic situations?', the answer is 'no'. And you would think that all are actually agreed that the latter is as it should be." *AFP*

S.Korea export growth picks up

SEOUL—South Korean exports grew at their fastest annual pace in three months in November, beating economists forecasts, while inflation eased to a six-month low, data from the commerce ministry showed on Wednesday.

That provided mixed signals to financial markets awaiting a possible cut next week in interest rates, which already stand at a record low, and follows an unexpected drop in October industrial output on Monday.

"Slower inflation data poses a favorable scene for the central bank to cut interest rates, but the strong export figures now make it questionable," said Oh Suk-tae, an economist at Citigroup.

Exports surged 27.8 percent in the year through November, snapping five consecutive months of slowing growth and beating a median forecast for a 26.1-percent rise in a Reuters poll of economists.

The National Statistical Office said the rise in inflation was slower than expected at 3.3 percent in the year through November, compared with 3.8 percent in October's data.

Economists in a Reuters poll had expected a median 3.8 percent rate in November.

November's exports were a monthly record high of $23.31 billion, while imports grew a faster-than-expected 30.3 percent in the 12 months through November to $20.54 billion, generating a trade surplus of $2.77 billion.

The strong export data boosted the South Korean won, despite concerns a rally in the currency could dent demand for exports. The won hit seven-year peaks in November and has advanced 14 percent so far this year against the US dollar.

The won's rally is a mixed blessing for the economy, Asia's third largest, as it curbs inflationary pressures by lowering the imported price of items such as oil, but also makes exports more expensive on world markets.

The moderate inflation data was released hours after a gloomy Bank of Korea survey found local companies pessimistic about their business outlook in the face of the won strength and weak local demand. The all-industry business survey index fell to 71 in December from 73 in November.

Economists said both sets of data provided room for the Bank of Korea to consider a third cut in interest rates this year at its Dec. 9 policy meeting.

October industrial production data released on Monday was also seen as favoring a rate cut, with output unexpectedly dropping a seasonally adjusted 0.9 percent from September.

The data comes a day after the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development cut its forecasts for South Korea's economic growth, citing bleak export prospects and a persistent slump in local demand. *Reuters*

Wall St. stocks, dollar and bonds fall

NEW YORK—US stocks and bonds fell on Tuesday as the dollar hit a record low against the euro.

In New York, gold and oil prices dropped. But gold still ended above $450 an ounce, buoyed by the weak dollar. Oil held above $49 a barrel, after topping $50.

The euro jumped to a record $1.3334 after European Central Bank President Jean-Claude Trichet told the European parliament that interest rates in the euro zone are very low and high oil prices have slowed the region's growth.

Dealers took it as a sign the ECB will eventually raise rates and, in the meantime, do nothing to stop the euro's climb against the dollar.

On Wall Street, stocks fell after three retail indices released on Tuesday showed the holiday shopping season got off to a sluggish start. High oil prices caused consumers to limit their spending.

"Retail really was the factor that coming into this weekend, everyone was hoping would lead the market higher—so it's quite a disappointment," said Robert Drust, managing director of listed trading at regional investment bank Wedbush Morgan.

The Dow Jones industrial average was down 47.88 points, or 0.46 percent, to end at 10,428.02, its lowest close in two weeks. The Standard & Poor's 500 Index was down 4.75 points, or 0.40 percent, to close at 1,173.82. The Nasdaq Composite Index was down 10.06 points, or 0.48 percent, to finish at 2,096.81.

But as November came to a close, all three major US stock indexes showed gains for the month. Both the Dow and the S&P 500 turned in their best performance so far this year, with the Dow up 4 percent and the S&P 500 up 3.9 percent.

The Nasdaq rose 6.2 percent in November, its largest rise since October 2003.

US Treasury bond investors sold debt after strong Midwestern business activity and upward revisions to gross domestic product showed the economy was still strong enough to let the Federal Reserve keep raising interest rates at a steady pace into 2005.

Shares of Wal-Mart Stores Inc., the world's biggest retailer, lost 2 percent to $52.06 after hinting it will cut prices in the weeks before Christmas.

Wal-Mart cut its forecast for November sales over the weekend and said sales on Black Friday—the day after Thanksgiving, one of the year's biggest for retailers—were disappointing.

Johnson Redbook's Retail Sales Index showed November sales rose only 2.9 percent, missing a target of 3.5 percent.

Data from the International Council of Shopping Centers and researcher ShopperTrak also indicated slow Thanksgiving weekend sales.

Consumer confidence fell in November to an eight-month low, the Conference Board said.

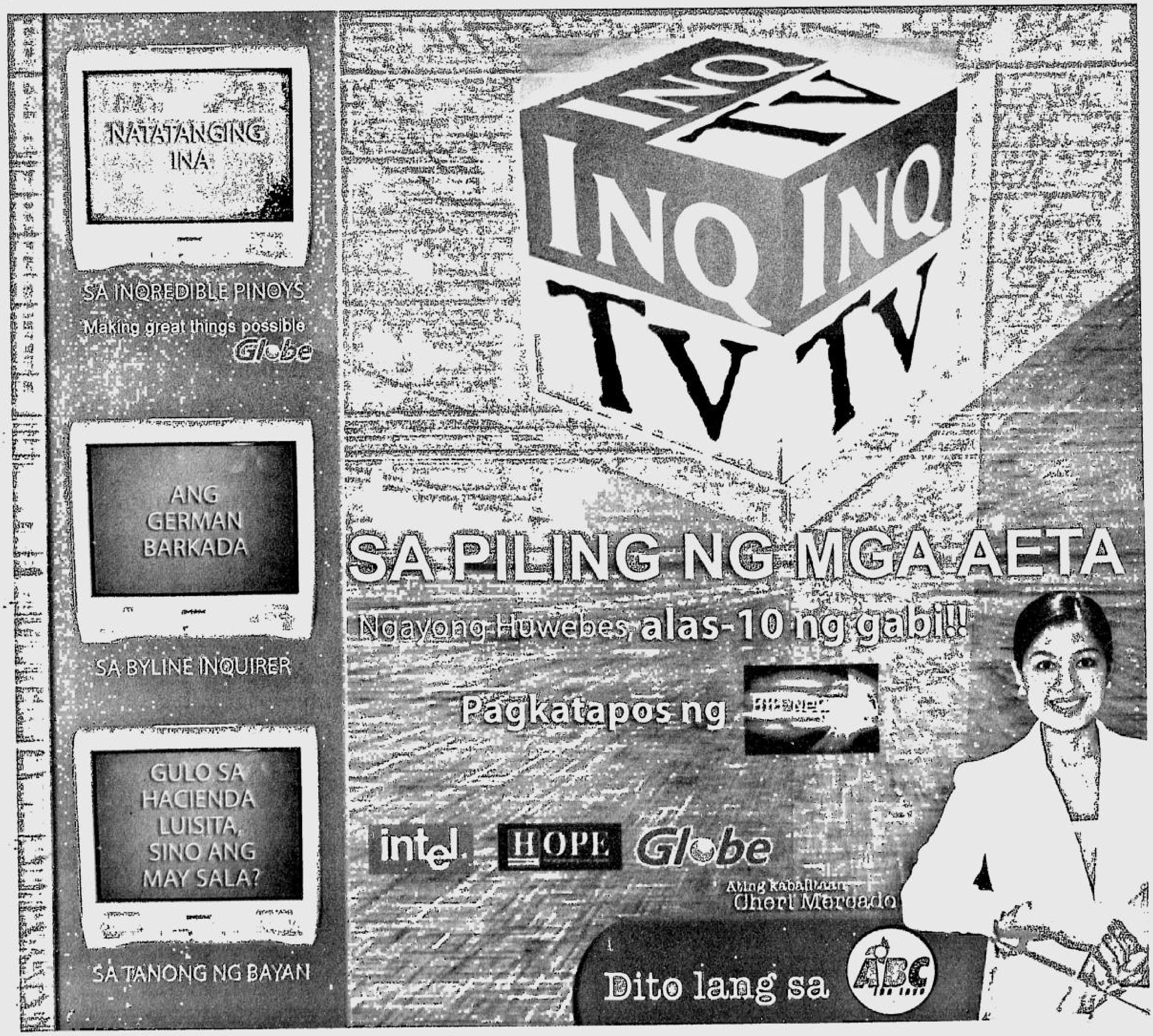
Drug maker Pfizer Inc., up 44 cents or 1.6 percent at $27.77, helped limit losses in the Dow and the S&P 500.

Pfizer, the world's largest drug maker, reaffirmed to industry analysts that it expects 2004 earnings to be more than 20 percent higher than last year.

But semiconductor stocks slid, weighing on the Nasdaq.

Intel Corp., due to give a mid-quarter update on Thursday, was down nearly 3 percent, or 68 cents, at $22.38.

In Tokyo, the benchmark Nikkei average lost 78.64 points, or 0.72 percent, to end Tuesday at 10,899.25, after data showed a drop in Japan's industrial output in October. *Reuters*



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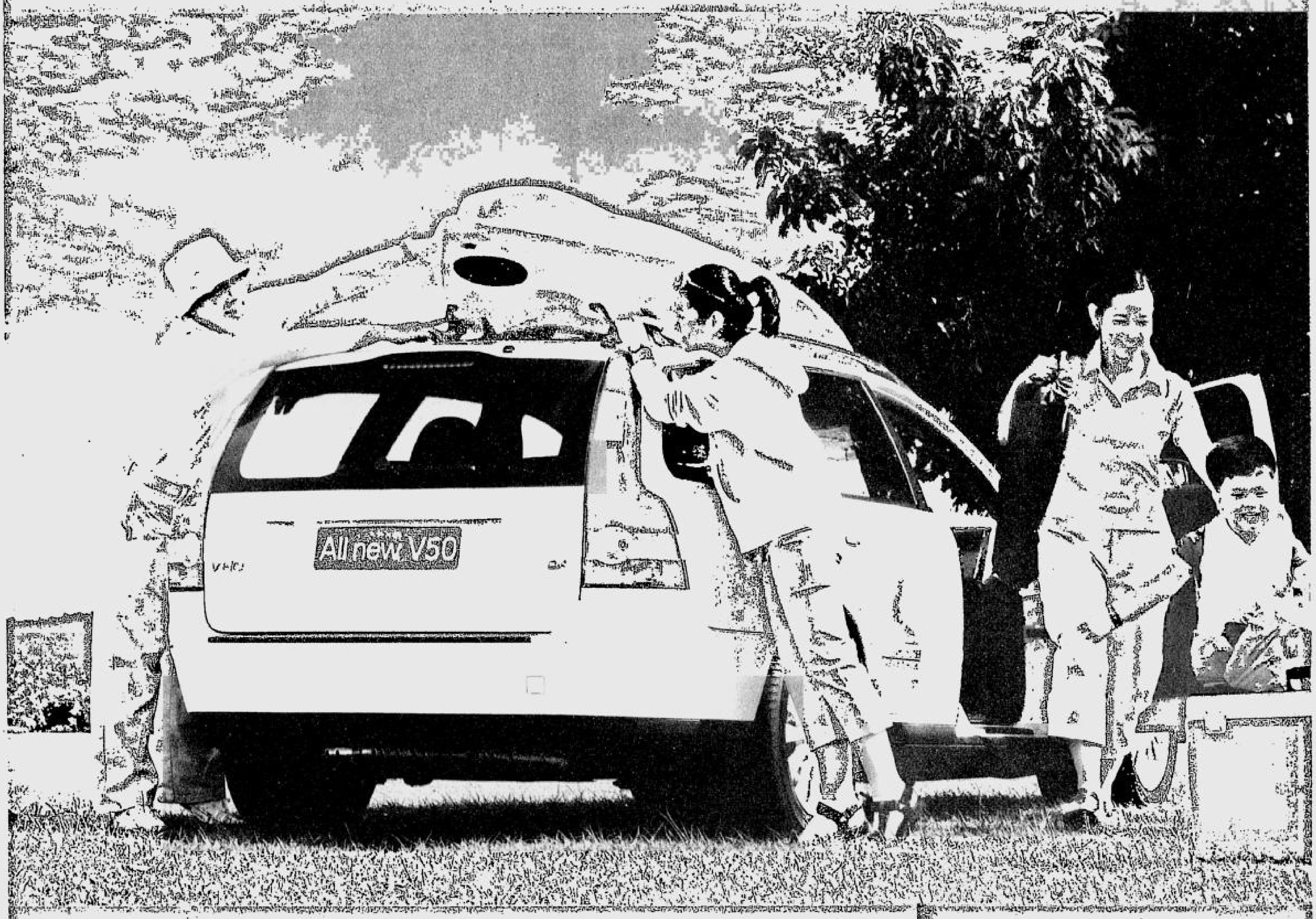

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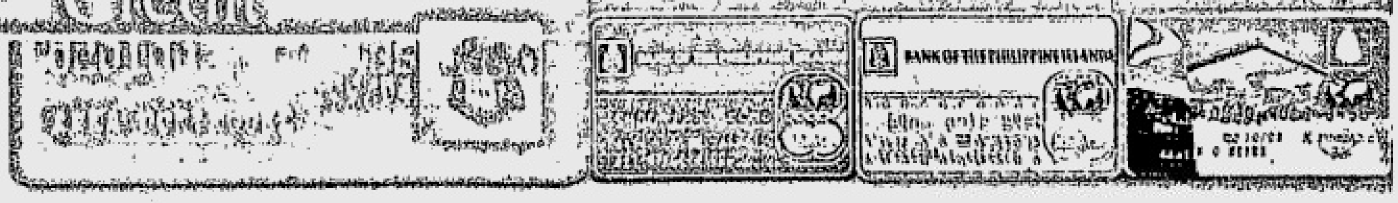

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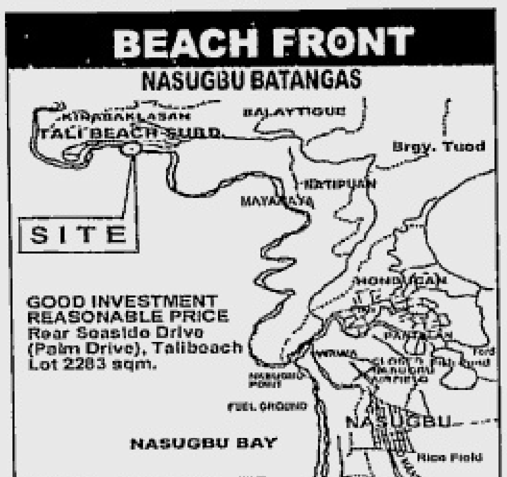

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NOTICE OF LOSS

Notice is given that the original Certificate of Ownership of a Heritage Park Lawn Lot ID # 04L08588 and Serial No. 62932 under the name of CARL DOMINIC E. ISLA was lost. (PDI-Nov 25, Dec 2 & 9, 2004)

Republic of the Philippines
DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL DEFENSE
BIDS AND AWARDS COMMITTEE
Camp General Emilio Aguinaldo, Quezon City
Telefax: Nr 421-2327; 911-6001 loc 6592
www.info.com.ph/~afpmod
pid@info.com.ph

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

(Re-Bidding)

The Armed Forces of the Philippines invites all interested parties to apply for eligibility and to bid for the **Marine Engineering Upgrade of Three (3) Jacinto Class Patrol Vessels (JCPV)** of the Philippine Navy. It has an approved budget of **Three Hundred Fifty Four Million Pesos (Php 354,000,000.00)**, chargeable against the AFP Modernization Program CY 2002 funds.

The Bid documents shall be available for issuance starting **November 26, 2004** until **December 19, 2004** during the office hours at the BAC Secretariat, Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Capability, Materiel and Technology Development, J9, GHQ, AFP, 3rd Floor, Bulwagang Mabini, Camp General Emilio Aguinaldo (CGEA), Quezon City. The bid documents shall be issued upon payment of a registration fee amounting to **Thirty Five Thousand Pesos (Php 35,000.00)**, which is not refundable. The form of payment shall be in cash or cashier's check in favor of the AFP Modernization Act Trust Fund.

A Special Power of Attorney, issued by the prospective bidder, authorizing its representative to purchase the bid documents in its behalf, shall be required before issuance of said documents.

A Pre-Bid Conference is scheduled on **December 6, 2004, 9:00 AM** (local time) at the **Silid Panday Pira**, 1st Floor, Bulwagang Mabini, Camp General Emilio Aguinaldo, Quezon City. Bidders are encouraged to submit their query/ies, if any, in writing to the BAC Secretariat prior to the Pre-Bid Conference.

The Bidder shall be allowed to inspect the three (3) JCPVs at the Cavite Naval Shipyard, Naval Base Cavite, Fort San Felipe, Cavite City upon purchase of bid documents until the deadline of submission of the bids.

Deadline for submission of bids is on **December 20, 2004, 9:00 AM** (local time) and followed immediately by the opening of bids on the same day at the Silid Panday Pira.

The Armed Forces of the Philippines reserves the right to reject any or all bids based on the grounds for disqualification specified in RA 9184 without assuming any obligation whatsoever for expenses or losses that may be incurred by the bidder in the preparation of the bid.

(Sgd.) ATTY JOSE N. FERRER JR
Chairman, DND-BAC

(PDI – November 25 & December 2, 2004)

COPE
COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION OF THE PHILIPPINES ENTERPRISE FOUNDATION, INC.
14-2 de Leon Compound, Zone 1 Calauag, Naga City
Tel No. (054) 4732675
Email Address:cope@globalink.net.ph

Invitation for Bids (IFB)

Date : December 1, 2004
Contract Identification No. : COPE F-1-2004
World Bank Grant No. : TF026783

The Partnership of Philippine Support Service Agencies, Inc. (PHILSSA) has received a grant from the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development towards the cost of UPSCALING URBAN POOR COMMUNITY RENEWAL SCHEME-PROJECT and intends to apply part of the funds to cover eligible payments under the Contract COPE F-1 2004 for the construction of micro-drainage system at Zone 2 Barangay Lerma and construction, rehabilitation and declogging of existing drainage systems at Zones 3,4,5 and 6 of Barangay Triangulo, Naga City. Bidding is open to all bidders from eligible source countries as defined in the Guidelines: Procurement under IBRD Loans and IDA Credits.

The Community Organization of the Philippines Enterprise Foundation, Inc. (COPE), the Implementing Agency of PHILSSA invites sealed bids from eligible bidders for the construction of construction micro-drainage system at Zone 2 Barangay Lerma and construction, rehabilitation and declogging of existing drainage system in Zones 3,4,5 and 6 of Barangay Triangulo, Naga City.

Bidding documents (and additional copies) may be purchased at Community Organization of the Philippines Enterprise Foundation, Inc. at 14-2 de Leon Compound, Zone 1 Barangay Calauag, Naga City for a nonrefundable fee of P2,500.00 for each set. Interested bidders may examine the bid documents and obtain further information at the same address.

For the purposes of clarifying certain issues, a pre-bid conference will be held on December 17, 2004, 9:00 o'clock in the morning at the Sangguniang Panlungsod session Hall of Naga, J. Miranda Ave., Concepcion Pequeña, Naga City.

Bids shall be valid for a period of 120 calendar days after Bid opening and must be accompanied be security of 2.5 % of the contractor's bid and shall be delivered to the Sangguniang Panlungsod of Naga, J. Miranda Ave., Concepcion Pequeña Naga City on or before January 7, 2005 at ten o'clock in the morning (10:00am) at which time they will be opened in the presence of the bidders who wish to attend.

BAC Chairperson

(PDI - Dec. 2, 2004)

PUBLIC NOTICES

NOTICE OF LOSS

QC Sports Club Stock Cert under the name of JIM-MAR INC (Jimmy Lo Cham). If no contest received new cert will be issued. (PDI - Dec 2, 9 & 16, 2004)

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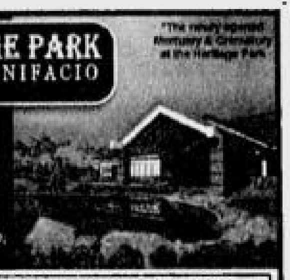

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We, the family of the late

BIENVENIDO "RENE" R. GOMEZ

Fondly remember him on the
Sixth Year since he joined
our Heavenly Father

Holy Masses will be offered today, Thursday,
02 December 2004 at the following Churches:

- Saint Francis of Assisi Church
  Shaw Boulevard, Mandaluyong City .... 6:00 a.m.
- Christ the King Church
  Green Meadows, Quezon City .... 6:00 a.m.
- Santuario de San Jose
  Greenhills, San Juan .... 6:15 a.m.
- Santuario de San Antonio
  Forbes Park, Makati City .... 6:15 a.m.
- San Agustin Church
  Palatin, Pasig City .... 6:00 a.m.
- Sta. Rosa de Lima Church
  Bagong Ilog, Pasig City .... 6:00 a.m.
- Holy Family Church
  Bo. Capitolyo, Pasig City .... 6:00 a.m.
- St. John the Baptist Church
  Taytay, Rizal .... 6:00 a.m.
- Immaculate Concepcion Church
  Pasig City .... 6:30 p.m.
- Sta. Clara de Monte Falco
  Caniogan, Pasig City .... 6:00 a.m.

"The Lord will open to them the gate of paradise,
and they will return to the homeland
where there is no death,
but only lasting joy."

IRENE FRANCO BUENVIAJE

Peacefully joined our Creator on November 30, 2004 at the age of 67.

Her loving husband **Jaime** (†); children and children-in-law **Jerome** (†) & **Vynna, Melvin** & **Jennifer, Iris** & **Sam**; grandchildren **Carlo, Hugo, Gino, Jero** and **Inez**; brother **Emmanuel** (†); sisters **Melita** and **Leticia**, sister-in-law **Lucy**; relatives & friends request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

Her remains lie in state at the La Funeraria Paz, 143 Araneta Avenue, Quezon City.

Cremation will be on December 5, 2004 after the 7:30 a.m. Mass at Paz Crematory, Quezon City.

Barbara Fe Mendoza Bacani

Born: December 04, 1917

*Peacefully joined her Creator
on December 01, 2004.*

Her bereaved family: husband **Pacifico** (†); children **Noel** (†) and **Remedios, Emiterio** and **Carmelita Trinidad, Nora** (†), **Hilda** and **Bogie, Elizabeth Arlene Bacani, Francis** and **Cynthia Naidas**; brothers and sisters **David** (†), **Constancia** (†), **Dorotea** (†), **Leonardo** (†), **Antonio** (†), **Leoncio, Conrado, Adoracion**; grandchildren, great grandchildren and other relatives request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

Her remains lie in state at the Loyola Memorial Chapels, Sucat, Parañaque.

Interment will be on Sunday, December 05, 2004 at the Loyola Memorial Park Sucat, Parañaque after the 2:00 p.m. Mass.

"Time is the only comforter for the loss of a mother."
Jane Welsh Carlyle

In memoriam

Clotilde del Fierro-de la Vega

Born to eternal life on 02 December 1999

*I remember my mother's prayers and they have always followed me.
They have clung to me all my life.*
Abraham Lincoln

---

*I am the way, the truth and the life.
No one comes to the Father except
through Me.*

John 14:6

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INVITATION TO APPLY FOR REGISTRATION/ ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

PROCUREMENT OF SECURITY SERVICES FOR NFA REGION VIII

The National Food Authority (NFA) invites all interested Private Security Agencies to register, apply for eligibility and to bid for provision of security services for Calendar Year 2005 at NFA Regional Office No. VIII. The service contract to be bid shall be divided into lots with one province treated as one (1) Lot, to wit:

LOT NO.	PROVINCE	NO. OF SG'S	PER ANNUM
1	NORTHERN LEYTE	24	P 2,964,329.28
2	SOUTHERN LEYTE	10	1,235,137.20
3	BILIRAN	4	494,054.88
4	WESTERN SAMAR	9	1,111,623.48
5	NORTHERN SAMAR	17	2,099,733.24
6	EASTERN SAMAR	12	1,482,164.64

LIST OF REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS WILL BE AVAILABLE FOR ISSUANCE AT NFA REGIONAL OFFICE NO. VIII AND SAID REQUIREMENTS FOR REGISTRATION CAN BE SUBMITTED TO RBAC SECRETARIAT AT THE REGIONAL OFFICE PAWING, PALO, LEYTE FOR REVIEW AND ISSUANCE OF CERTIFICATE OF ACCREDITATION

Only Registered Private Security Agencies with the NFA will be allowed to apply for eligibility

The registration requirements may be secured from the Secretariat Bids and Awards Committee for Security Services (BAC-SS) at the NFA Regional Office, Pawing, Palo, Leyte after payment of non-refundable fee in the amount of One Thousand Pesos (Php 1,000.00). Only those who have pre-qualified and considered eligible by the RBAC and who have paid the Php 5,000.00 as Bidding Fee shall be allowed to participate in the Pre-Bidding Conference and the Bidding Proper. Hereunder are the schedules:

Nov. 30 - Dec. 10, 2004	Issuance of Application Forms for Registration
December 14, 2004 (1700H)	Deadline for submission of application forms and required documents for Registration
December 6-20, 2004	Issuance of Certificate of Registration and application for Eligibility to Bid
January 3, 2005 (1700H)	Deadline for submission of application for eligibility and documentary requirements
January 10, 2005 (1300H)	Pre-Bidding Conference at the NFA-R.O. 8 Conference Room, Pawing, Palo, Leyte
January 24, 2005 (9:30H)	Submission and Opening of Sealed Bids

A Special Power of Attorney (SPA) issued by the Prospective bidder owner (for sole ownership) and/or resolution from the Board authorizing their representative (for Corporations) to purchase the bid documents, to sign for and behalf of the owner/corporation whatever documents relative to the bidding and to attend the pre-bidding conference and during the opening of the bids and shall be required.

NFA reserves the right to reject any or all bids to waive any formality/informality of the bids, received and to accept only such Bids which are advantageous to the National Food Authority

(Sgd.) **ANTONIO J. ADORABLE**
Asst Regional Manager II
and Chairman-RBAC, NFA-RO VIII

(PDI - Nov 25 & Dec 2, 2004)

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Philippine National Oil Company
Exploration Corporation
Bldg., I. Fort Bonifacio, Taguig, Metro Manila
Tel. No. 840-2034, Fax No. 840-1459

FOR SALE THRU SEALED BIDDING
"AS IS, WHERE IS" BASIS

RSDME No.	Description	Qty.	Minimum Bid Price (In Pesos)
011316	Junk / Scrap Metal & Various used tires	(estimated 2,000 tons)	MP5,640.00

The above items can be inspected on the place indicated below.

Location	Contact Person/s	Telephone Nos. Fax No.
Malangas Coal Project, Malangas, Zamboanga, Sibugay	D.G. Gaculan	(0919) 540-2154 (0919) 547-0630

Deadline for submission of sealed bids is on December 08, 2004, not later than 2:00 p.m., at PNOC-Exploration Corporation (PNOC-EC) bid box, Property Management, First Floor Building 1, Energy Center, Merritt Road, Fort Bonifacio, Taguig, Metro Manila and Malangas Coal Project, Malangas, Zamboanga, Sibugay. Bids shall be then publicly opened at 2:30 p.m. on December 13, 2004 at the above address.

Bids documents are available at the above mentioned addresses c/o E. A. Ababol/ D.G. Gaculan upon payment of non-refundable fee of Five Thousand Pesos (PHP5,000.00) per set. Ten Percent (10%) bids deposits in Cash or Certified/ Manager's check is required.

PNOC reserves the rights to reject any or all bids, waive any informality found therein and accept such bids as maybe considered most advantageous to its interest. The decision of PNOC EC shall be final and binding.

(Sgd.) Ricardo S. Basallo, Jr.
Administration Manager

(PDI--Dec. 1 & 2, 2004)

TransCo
National Transmission Corporation
Visayas-Operation and Maintenance
Banilad Power Complex, Nasipit, Talamban C.C
Tel No 346 3427 346 9449

INVITATION TO PREQUALIFY AND TO BID
AD NO. TRANS VIS-2004-34

Pre-Bid Conference: December 7, 2004 @ 1:30 PM at the Transco Bidding Room, Banilad Power Complex, Cebu City
Bidding Date: December 16, 2004 @ 2:00 PM at the Transco Bidding, Banilad Power Complex, Cebu City

The National Transmission Corporation, Bids and Awards Committee-Visayas invites interested parties to apply for eligibility and to submit sealed bids on (pls. see above schedule) to be opened publicly at Transco Bidding Room, Banilad Power Complex, Nasipit, Talamban, Cebu City for the following requirements

PR NO.	DESCRIPTION	QTY. /UM	APPROVED BUDGET (ABC) (in pesos)
LSAV-2004-739	Disconnect switch, one way, remote controlled, for 69 kv	3 units	P15,000,000.00

All Bids should be within the Approved Budget of Contract to be Bid in order to qualify. Bidding will be a three envelope system on a per Purchase Requisition (PR) basis.

Eligibility forms and bidding documents are available starting November 25, 2004, at the Materials Management Services Section from 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM, Monday to Friday, upon payment of a non-refundable fee of Php500.00 / schedule and presentation of TIN/Supplier's Number (DCE). Last day of issuance of bidding documents will be a day before the opening of bids.

Prospective Bidders shall signify conformance to bidding terms and conditions as required and shall ensure the same through proper submission/execution. The procurement rules and regulations used in this transaction shall be in accordance with the Implementing Rules and Regulations - A of Republic Act 9184. Source of funding is from Internal Cash Generation of Transco.

The Corporation reserves the right to accept or reject any or all bids, waive any defects therein and to annul the bidding process and reject all bids at anytime prior to award of contract, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected bidder or bidders or any obligation to inform the affected bidder or bidders of the grounds for the basis of BAC's action.

For further inquiries, please contact the BAC Secretariat thru telephone number (032) 346-9449 or fax number (032) 346-3427

(Sgd.) OCTAVIO G. BRIONES
Chairman BAC

(PDI-Nov 25 & Dec 2, 2004)

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PRIVATIZATION AND MANAGEMENT OFFICE

INVITATION TO BID

The Privatization and Management Office (PMO) is offering for public bidding, on an **"as-is-where-is"** basis, the following asset formerly belonging to Carruf Development Corporation, as follows:

Description	Indicative Price
Unit 18-N, with an area of 77.85 sq.m. located at Legaspi Towers 300	P2,335,500

Sealed bids will be received on 16 December 2004, 3:00 p.m. at the PMO Conference Room, 6th Floor, Privatization and Management Office, 104 Gamboa St., Legaspi Village, Makati City.

Interested parties are advised to deal directly with the PMO Marketing Department. Authenticated bidding documents, together with the Asset Specific Catalogue, may be secured from PMO for a nominal fee of P500.00.

For inquiries, please contact Ms. Maureen B. Vallente at telephone numbers 817-8762 or 892-2145.

(PDI - Dec. 2, 3 & 4, 2004)

Mr Softy only goes for top-of-the-line quality

ON THE occasion of Mr Softy's fourth anniversary, an all-new product will be introduced - the Mr Softy Glaze. This product, a formulation of the R&D department, is designed for the appetite of ice cream lovers looking for a revolutionary ice cream recipe. Mr Softy Glaze comes in three flavors - pineapple kiwi, strawberry kiwi, and choco loco.

"It's still ice cream based but customers are sure to like it because of its all-natural ingredients. We use real tidbits for this product," Vince Perea, Mr Softy's operations and marketing manager said.

He emphasized Mr Softy is the first in the country to come up with pineapple kiwi toppings. But since the kiwi fruit is imported, the price of the product, which is P20 per cup, is relatively higher but it's value for money, he said, because of the ice cream's high quality.

Another new from Mr Softy this year is the Mango Dip variants, introduced to cater to customers with sweet tooth for this luscious tropical fruit.

Over competition, Mr Softy has many aces up its sleeves. The quality and price of its products are unmatched in the industry.

Mr Softy is BFAD (Bureau of Food and Drugs)-approved so consumers can be confident they're eating a sweet and safe ice cream.

Vince Perea, general manager of Mr Softy said profit wasn't the primary inspiration for the business. "Quality is more important to us and it is what keep consumers on coming back," he stressed.

It is precisely because of this premium on quality that a BFAD certification was secured, even when it's unnecessary or not even heard of other ice cream makers in the country.

Quality is a value that the family sticks to "because we ourselves are No.1 consumers of Mr Softy ice cream," he said.

Mr Softy also boasts of a cornucopia of flavors. Customers may choose from 31 different flavors, from the all-time favorite chocolate to fruit flavors. Mr Softy is also served in varied forms - regular cone, sugar cone, regular cone with dip, sugar cone with dip, or in cups - so that consumers can enjoy their servings according to their peculiarities.

Mr Softy has a central commissary ensuring unhampered supply and high level of production. The ice cream plant, which is located in Marikina, meets the strictest standards in quality control. A relative of the Pereas has been employed to watch over the quality control process, Vince said.

Virgo said the commissary is run professionally, with the production crew required to wear gowns and masks. They even secured a health certification to be qualified food handlers.

Mr Softy as well maintains an R&D department, which is the company's avenue in coming up periodically with new products or variations in the existing product line.

Not satisfied with its current range of variants, Mr Softy plans to introduce two new products on a regular basis.

"Our plan is to introduce two new products every year," Virgo said.

Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas

DISPOSAL COMMITTEE

NOTICE OF PUBLIC AUCTION

Notice is hereby given that the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas will sell **VARIOUS SCRAP MATERIALS** located at the BSP Main Complex, A. Mabini cor. P. Ocampo Sr. Sts., Malate, Manila and at the Philippine International Convention Center, CCP Complex, Roxas Boulevard, Pasay City thru sealed bids to be received by the Committee not later than **10:00 a.m.** on **13 December 2004** at Room MR-2C, 2nd Floor, 5-Storey Building, BSP Main Complex, A. Mabini cor. P. Ocampo Sr. Streets, Malate, Manila.

Forms and further information may be obtained from the Committee's Executive Officer c/o Ms. Crisanta F. Reyes, Administrative Services Department, Room 110, Ground Floor, 5-Storey Building, A. Mabini cor. P. Ocampo Sr. Streets, Malate, Manila, Telephone No. 525-8786.

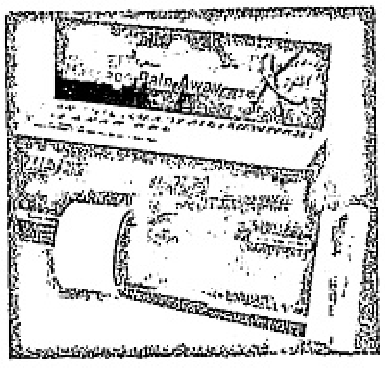
(Sgd.) **EDUARDO L. MAGAHIS**
Vice-Chairman

25 November 2004

(PDI - Dec. 2, 2004)

ProductFILES

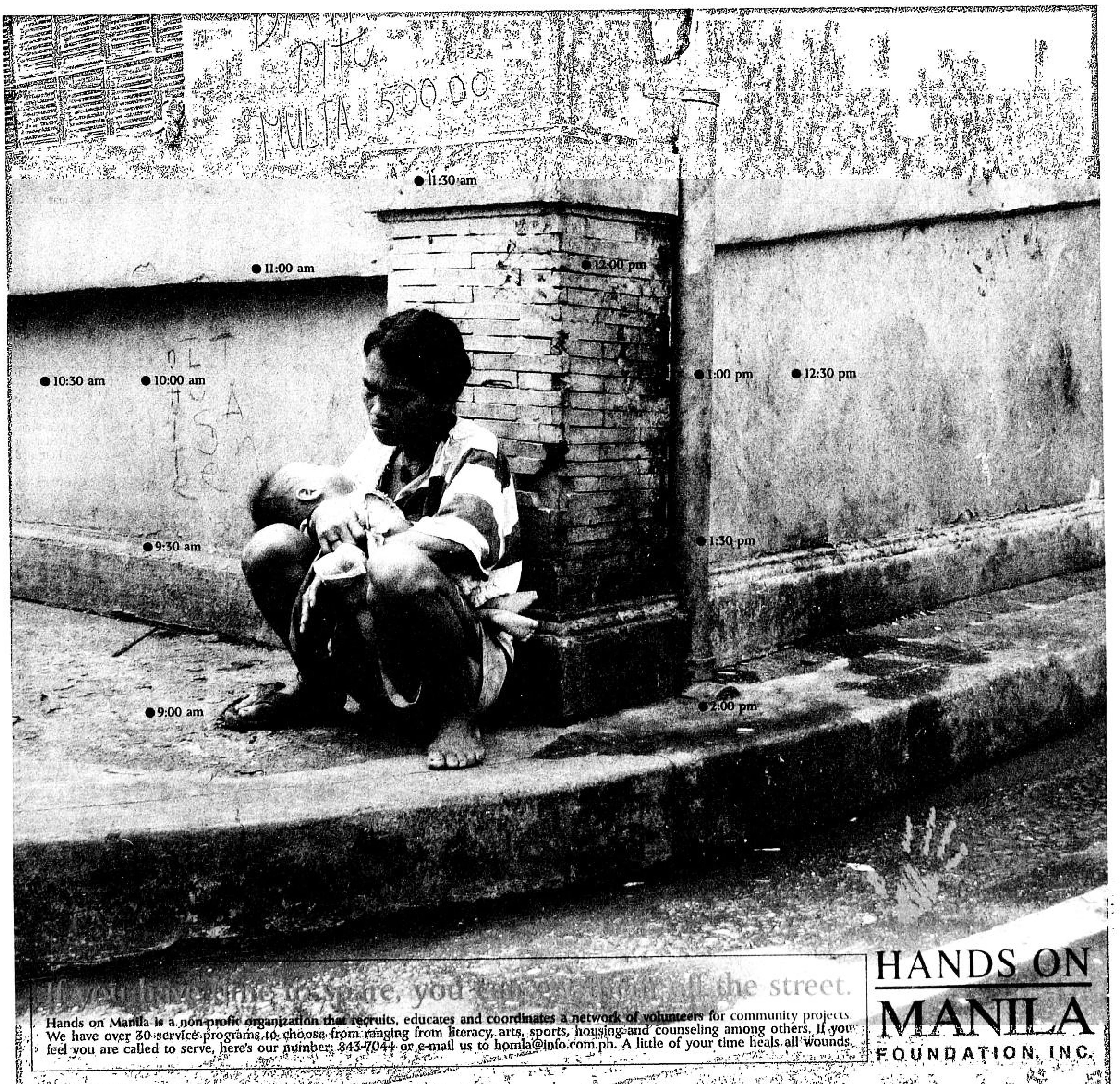
No more body aches and pains



FROM Alaxan, the trusted name for body pains, comes the new Alaxan Gel. This latest innovation is a non-greasy topical pain reliever that soothes and relieves aching muscles, swollen joints, stiff neck, shoulder pains, backache, sprains, cramps and pain associated with arthritis. It provides soothing heat relief that lasts for hours. The high-performance synergy of Methyl Salicylate and Menthol produces that soothing heat relief consumers look for. To use this, just apply a small amount on the affected area and gently massage until gel disappears. With Alaxan Gel, consumers can experience faster-acting and long-lasting relief for all types of body pain. It comes in 3 sizes with these suggested retail prices (SRP): 5 grams (P10), 10 grams (P20), and 30 grams (P55). Now, there's no reason for you to endure those debilitating body aches and pains.

THE MANORS AT SOUTHPEAK: FILINVEST'S GATEWAY TO THE SOUTH

Going home is now faster and easier with the newly-opened San Pedro Exit at the South Superhighway. Recognizing this, major real estate developer Filinvest Land Inc (FLI) broke new grounds when it recently launched its latest community, The Manors, in San Pedro, Laguna. Only ten minutes away from Alabang, The Manors showcase the best of countryside living. Its prime location gives residents easy access to schools, churches and commercial establishments. Celebrating the milestone were FLI brokers and in-house sales teams, led by (from left) business development officer for The Manors, Adrian Cantor and business development assistant, Hazel de Guzman. The officiating priest was Rev. Fr. John de Castro, Oblates of Saint James. For more information call 772-2745, 850-1582 or visit website, www.filinvestland.com.



Hands on Manila is a non-profit organization that recruits, educates and coordinates a network of volunteers for community projects. We have over 30 service programs to choose from ranging from literacy, arts, sports, housing and counseling among others. If you feel you are called to serve, here's our number: 843-7044 or e-mail us to homla@info.com.ph. A little of your time heals all wounds.

HANDS ON MANILA
FOUNDATION, INC.

Globe Autoload now available at UnionBank

WITH today's fast-paced mobile lifestyle, everyone is always on the go. That's why innovations leader Globe Handyphone provides more and more convenient reloading options for its subscribers. This latest partnership brings together the reloading power of Autoload with UnionBank, one of the country's largest banks.

Globe Handyphone and Touch Mobile subscribers who are also UnionBank EON cardholders can now reload Globe or Touch Mobile prepaid credits instantly over-the-air and have the amount automatically debited from their EON card. Available denominations for Globe Prepaid subscribers are P100, P250, P300, P500 and P1000, while Touch Mobile offers its subscriber base the P100, P200, P300 and P400 value.

All they have to do is to first register their UnionBank EON card through one of these three ultra-convenient options: a visit to any UnionBank branch, logging on to the UnionBank website (www.unionbankph.com), or by calling the UnionBank Call Center at 84-186.

During registration, Globe or Touch Mobile subscribers will have to nominate a 6-digit registration key which they will use to activate the Autoload service a day after the successful registration. Texting REG <6-digit registration key> to 2318 allows the Globe or Touch Mobile subscriber and Union Bank EON cardholder to receive their MPIN and a text message confirming the activation. Upon receiving their MPIN, Globe and Touch Mobile subscribers are now ready to reload. To start loading up on Autoload Prepaid credits to your loved ones, registered subscribers can text "RLD <Amount> <MPIN> <Mobile No. to be reloaded>" and send this to 2318. To reload your own Globe or Touch Mobile Prepaid phone, text "RLD<amount>" and send this to 2318.

And as an added benefit for all enrolled subscribers, they can also make banking transactions such as balance inquiry and sending money to another Globe/TM subscriber with a UnionBank Eon account. To inquire on account balance or to send money to another subscriber, all they have to do is send "BAL" or "SEND<amount><mobile number>" respectively to 2318. Both sender and recipient will receive a confirmation message with corresponding trace number for added security.

The standard transaction fee of P2.50 applies to all Autoload via UnionBank EON card transactions. For more information on the various mobile banking transactions available, registered subscribers can send "HELP" to 2318.

This Globe Autoload tie-up with UnionBank - is a valuable addition to the ever-growing network of Globe and Touch Mobile Autoload partners and distributors nationwide. With the wonders of p2p technology, the accessibility and convenience of Autoload reloading reaches new heights, proving that Globe is indeed the country's leader in mobile innovation today.

NBAN
Globe
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GLOBE and Union Bank forges new partnership. Representing Globe and Union Bank at the MOA signing are Ricky Santos, Union Bank AVP and product manager for retail deposits and Aileen Vardeleon, Globe Prepaid marketing manager reload services.

ARTQUAKE ON ARTWALK

Artquakeisms Artist Circle will hold its 4th Group Art Exhibit entitled 'Artquake Aftershock Intensity 4' on Dec. 3, at the Artwalk Gallery, LRI Business Plaza, 210 Nicanor Garcia St. (former Reposo) Bel-Air II, Makati City. Featured Artist are: Lory Joy Abiola, Anthony Abuel, Cornelius Acasio, Mark Anthony Alejandro, Mark Dawn Arcamo, Aurelio Bautista, Bjorn Calleja, Raymond Cariaso, Christopher Cayanan, Andrei Colinares, Jigger Cruz, Peter Edric Go, Erly Lim, Gerald Morales, Abigail Ortiz, Rhodora Marie Ramirez, Allisonne Gaille Realuyo, Gaye Audrey Realuyo, Godfrey Allen Realuyo, Liezl Recto, Anthony Sibug, Jepoy Soriano, Dexter Sy, Charlie Villagracia and with the Special Participation of: Ramon Rojo Realuyo, Janddie Banuelos Castillo, and the organizer of the Art Group Prof. Mildred Castillo Realuyo. The exhibit runs until Dec. 30.

STARSTRUCK SURPRISE JOLLIBEE CUSTOMERS IN SM NORTH EDSA

StarStruck took Jollibee customers by storm when they recently visited the Jollibee store at SM North Edsa as part of their mall tour. Jollibee customers can vote for their candidates through the Bee StarStruck promo. Every P100 worth of Jollibee food products is equivalent to 50 votes which Jollibee customers can send using the 16-digit Bee StarStruck code. This also gives them a chance to win a weekly prize worth P5,000. As the promo ends, the StarStruck candidate that obtains the highest votes will receive a contract from Jollibee. The latest result released last Nov. 14 showed that there are already over 90,000 texters who sent in their votes. More and more votes are added each day for the remaining StarStruck candidates.

AYALA CINEMA ANNOUNCES GRAND PRIZE RAFFLE DRAW WINNER

Ayala Cinemas recently conducted a special raffle promo for moviegoers who watched the recent Steven Spielberg romantic comedy, featuring Tom Hanks and Catherine Zeta Jones -- 'The Terminal.' Coveting the grand prize is Joanna Atienza, who will soon be off to the US as she won a round trip plane ticket courtesy of Ayala Cinemas and United Airlines. Ayala Cinemas is known for its unwavering commitment to provide total entertainment through its state-of-the-art theater facilities and quality film features. Attuned with this, Ayala Cinemas regularly conduct fun, exciting and rewarding promotions and activities as a special premium for its loyal patrons. In photo are (from left): Ernesto Gajo, DTI representative; Lelet Volfango, Ayala Cinemas marketing manager; Ella Samson, UA passenger sales executive; Madel Martin, president and general manager /Aerotel Ltd Corp; Tet Busmente, UA manager for sales and operations and Larry Alcantara, UA passenger sales executive.

Honest SM guards cited

THREE security guards at the SM Supermalls were recently cited for their honesty and integrity, making the company proud of their commitment to service. All three found wallets filled with cash and valuables, and made sure these were properly returned to their respective owners.

SG Rafael Martinez from CMP Security Agency Inc, found the wallet of Charito Angeles at the second level of the SM Megamall Covered Parking area in Mega A at around 9:35 p.m. last Nov. 1. The wallet was filled P25,000 and assorted IDs, yet he immediately turned this over so that Angeles could be contacted and reclaim her wallet.

On the following day, Nov. 2, SM City Sta. Mesa SG Julian Dotimas from the CMP Federal Security Agency Inc recovered a wallet containing P37,220 and ATM cards. As soon as he found it at the South Road Pedestrian area at 6 p.m., Dotimas immediately turned it over to the security office, which sought its owner, Michelle Jovellana.

It was the third straight day for honesty at the SM malls when SM Megamall SG Remante Guyos from Megaforce Security Agency and Allied Services Inc recovered Cristina Barcelon's wallet on the afternoon of Nov. 3 at the Covered Parking Lot B. The wallet contained P9,120, $1 and Y10,000.

SM's Antolin Paule (left) and Royston Cabuñag cited SM Megamall's SG Rafael Martinez from CMP Federal Security Agency Inc. Martinez recovered Charito Angeles' wallet which contained P25,000 in cash last Nov. 1 at the SM Megamall Covered Parking A.

SM City Sta. Mesa's SG Julian Dotimas from CMP Federal Security Agency Inc recovered a wallet containing P37,220 owned by Michelle Jovellana at the SM City Sta. Mesa South Road Pedestrian last Nov. 2. With him are SM's Antolin Paule (left) and SM City Sta. Mesa's mall manager Emmanuel Navera.

SM Megamall's Renante Guyos from Megaforce Security and Allied Services Inc turned over a wallet which contained P9,120, and Y10,000 owned by Cristina Barcelon found at SM Megamall Covered Parking B last Nov. 3. With him are SM's Antolin Paule and SM Megamall's mall manager Royston Cabuñag.

Bits & Clips

X-mas party, fundraiser

THE ASSOCIATION of Former Flight Attendants of the Philippine Airlines will hold its general assembly and Christmas Party tonight at 6 p.m. at the Philippine Army Officers Club in Fort Bonifacio. Members and interested parties are requested to come in the 60's to 70's attire. Ticket price is P500 with dinner. Lots of cash and door prizes will be given away. The fundraising project is for the benefit of financially challenged former flight attendants. For inquiries, call Claudine Zialcita, wife of Rep. Ed Zialcita at 0918-9119512 or 551-5163.

Charantia joins int'l confab

CHARANTIA Ampalaya Food Supplement, the pioneer and no. 1 ampalaya food supplement in the Philippines has been invited to join the 12th Annual World Congress on Anti-Aging in the United States. The event will be held from Dec. 2 to 5 at the Mandalay Bay Resort and Casino in Las Vegas, Nevada. Charantia will be represented by Herbcare Corp of America, the sister company of Herbcare Corp Phils, and Full Life Natural Options Inc, distributor of Charantia in USA under the brand name Charantea. Charantia will exhibit variants of its ampalaya food supplements which have gained acceptance of Filipino diabetics and the endorsement from Amhop.

Business, economics confab

THE "1st Business and Economics Conference and Exhibit" will be held on Dec. 2 to 4, at the Yuchengco Auditorium, De La Salle University Taft Manila. With the theme "Emerging Issues on Business and Economics: Governance and Innovation", this academic undertaking aims to provide an excellent forum for business educators as well as researchers to gain knowledge in areas that are important to business and the Philippine economy. Interested delegates/exhibitor may call The Next Step Events Planner at 813-0148, 893-9729.

Recoletos' history confab

IN PREPARATION for its 4th Centennial Celebration in 2006, the Order of Augustinian Recollects (OAR), popularly known as Recoletos, will hold a national historical conference on Dec. 3 and 4, at the San Sebastian College-Recoletos (SSC-R) Auditorium, Manila. The conference, with the theme "Recoletos 400: History, Legacy and Culture," aims to renew interest in Philippine history particularly in the early stages of Christian evangelization. The national historical assembly is open to all historians, professors, students, researchers, and history enthusiasts. Registration fee is Php 300. For details, call Anthoneth Salcedo at (02)926-0959; fax (02)456-1648; mobile 0920-2988235; e-mail postmaster@recoletos.ph.

Cartoonist to teach kids animation

DO YOU want to know the secrets behind the success of your favorite animated characters such as X-Men, Aladdin, Dragon Ball Z, The Little Mermaid, and Sailormoon? Not many know it, but a Filipino is actually one of the proud people who helped create these popular TV icons.

With over 20 years' experience, Norman dela Cruz is an acknowledged pioneer in the Philippine animation industry. Trained by Burbank Animation Inc, an associate company of Hanna Barbera, he established the Philippine Animation Studio and was an animator for series such as Tom & Jerry, The Flintstones, T-Rex, Fantastic Four, James Bond Jr., Biker Mice from Mars, The Twins (Julio & Julia) and Hercules. He has also lectured about animation in Singapore, Malaysia, Taiwan, Saudi Arabia, Hong Kong and Thailand.

Filipinos are now recognized globally for their talent in animation, and what's more, our animators are willing to share their secrets to anime fans and followers as well as students, not just to entertain but also to provide educational value and other useful benefits as well.

In line with this In D Basket Productions is offering a Lecture-Demo Workshop on the Basics of Animation with Norman dela Cruz, where participants will see Norman's creations such as the 100 percent Pinoy anime hero Lapu-Boy, learn what's cool in animation, get the latest anime tips and tricks, do hands-on sketching with leading animators, and embark on talent discovery thru audience participation. What's more, all workshops utilize the latest audio-visual equipment for maximum learning.

The workshop series is open to all interested schools and civic, social, community-based and local government organizations. For more information, contact In D Basket Productions at Mezzanine Floor, San Antonio Building, 7464 Bagtikan Street, San Antonio Village, Makati City, or call (02)729-5013, 0919-6533285 or 0920-9241956.

ProductFILES

The refreshingly fruity drink in a cup

THERE'S a refreshing new fruit drink in an ingenious, spill-free cup that's bound to change our drinking habits. Introducing the new Refresh Flavored Drinks. Packed in the same innovative plastic cup of Refresh Mineral Water, this fun new beverage is convenient to bring along. Kids and moms alike will appreciate its handy and worry-free container that are perfect for baon, recess, field trips and picnics. Plus, Refresh Flavored Drink stand upright on its own, so it can be left on a table top without worrying about your drink toppling over and spilling. It's also so easy to pop a straw through its plastic covered top so you can enjoy your drink without making a mess. Refresh Flavored Drinks come in 220ml cups - offering 10 percent more product than the usual doypack - in three fruit-bursting flavors - Orange, Pineapple and Dalandan. These delightful fruit concoctions are oozing with citrus goodness that will surely captivate hearts and taste buds alike. And it comes with a price that fits your budget perfectly so you get more value for your money. Try this refreshingly fruity drink today and discover why Refresh Flavored Drinks are the cooler, more practical and more exciting way of quenching your thirst.

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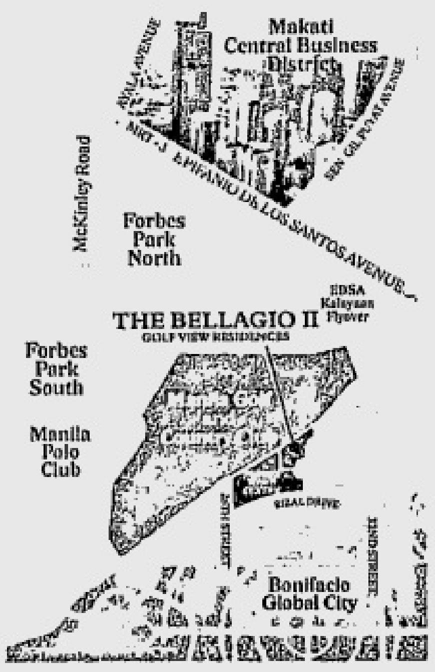
Makati
Central Business
District
AYALA AVENUE
SEN. GIL PUYAT AVENUE
MRT-3
EPIFANIO DE LOS SANTOS AVENUE
McKinley Road
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Park
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THURSDAY, DECEMBER 2, 2004

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LIFESTYLE

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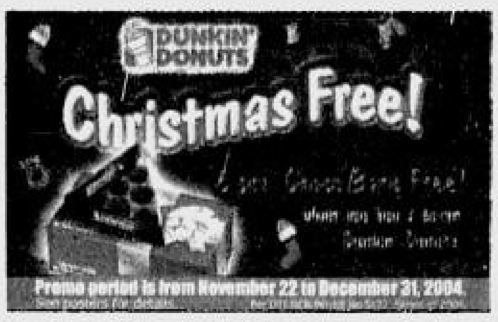
Text us your feedback: Inquirer life name/city/message to 2207 (Globe) or 283 (Smart)

Editor **Chelo Banal-Formoso**



Slow food for the working man

By Mol Fernando
Contributor

STRESS, the bane of all executives, hardworking or hardly working, again reared its ugly head with the news of another untimely promotion into the afterlife of a comptroller of a manufacturing company.

Virgil, a stressed office executive, was also a marathon runner who kept fit with a passion. He ate sensibly and kept within the bounds of his allowed Body Mass Index (BMI). News had it that he had come home after a particularly grueling day at the office and slipped into a deep sleep from which he never again saw the sun.

We all know a friend or an officemate, of more-or-less our age, meeting his Creator under similar circumstances: stroke or heart failure inevitably traced to stress.

So what is the harassed working man to do? Find time to exercise, eat the right foods and, though some of us can only dream about it, actually keep regular hours. Our addition to this creed is comestibles nurtured "in traditional ways of growing, producing and preparing food." In other words, the new-old buzz word, "slow food."

Reject fast foods. Live longer. No more burgers and fries, fried chicken, baked potato with cheese and bacon bits. Anything frozen in a package that needs to be just heated, fried or nuked in the microwave is never good. Rule of thumb: anything prepared under 30 minutes is unhealthy fast food.

Here is an example of slow food for the gastronomically challenged executive. Follow the instructions carefully.

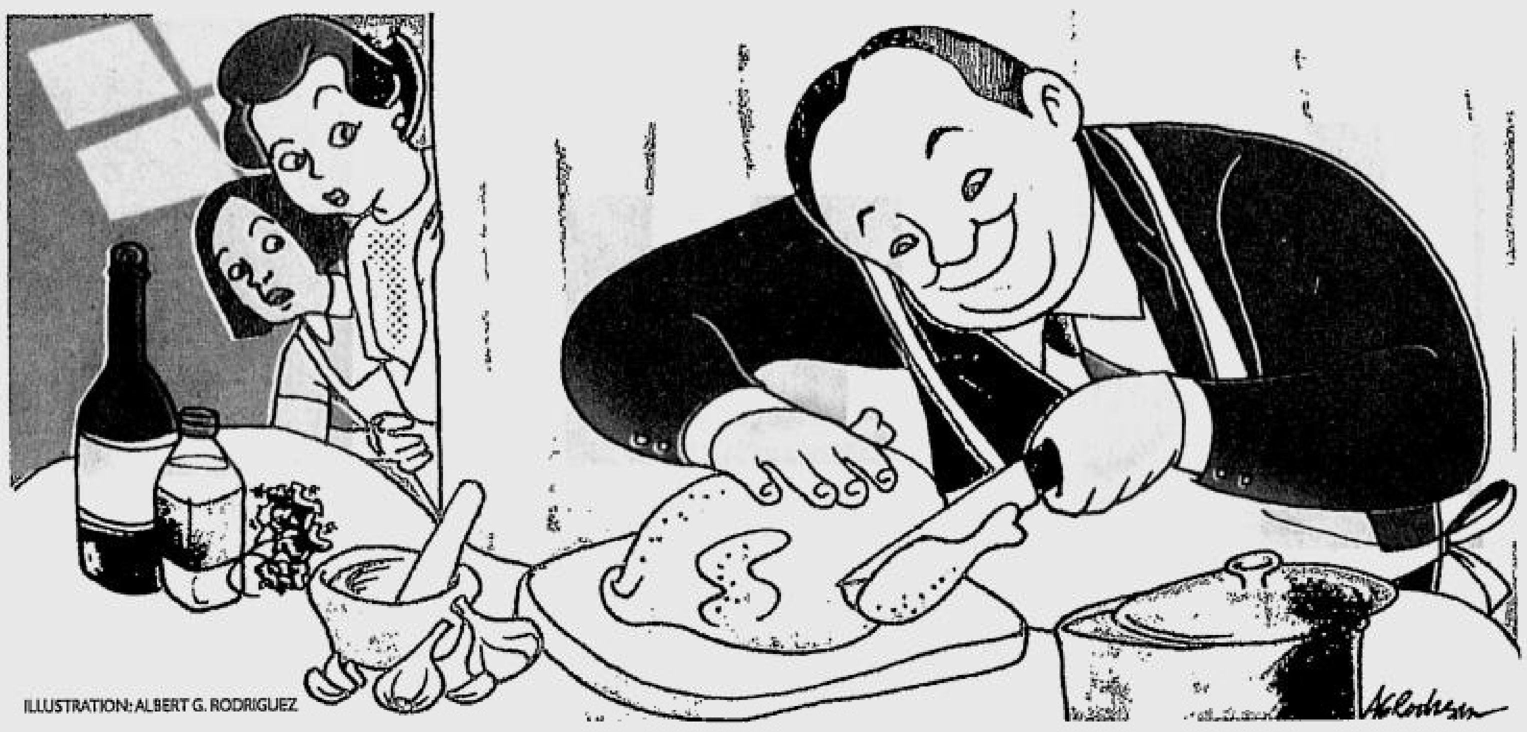


ILLUSTRATION: ALBERT G. RODRIGUEZ

Chicken with Pancetta and Balsamic Vinegar

(Otherwise known as French Style Adobong Manok)

This is a very old, traditional French recipe. I was surprised to realize upon discovering that maybe the *adobo* is really more global than we had previously thought.

For the software, you will need:

1 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
2 pc *pancetta* (Italian bacon) or ordinary bacon, sliced
1 chicken, weighing about 1.5 kg
1 c white wine (an Italian white wine such as a Frascati will do nicely)
4 tbsp balsamic vinegar
8 whole cloves garlic, peeled
Minced parsley (optional)
Salt and pepper to taste

For the hardware:

1 oven, 1 ovenproof skillet with cover, 1 very sharp knife, 1 slotted turner (*sianse*)

Procedure:

(Please follow very carefully. This is what slow food is about.)

If you have a cook, give her some money and tell her to go watch a movie in the nearest mall. If you have other helpers, send them to accompany the cook.

Wash the chicken well and pat dry with a clean cloth towel. While you are doing this, try to appreciate the effort of so many people involved in the production of this snobbish French *adobo*. There are the farmers who raised the corn and soybeans to feed the chicks to adulthood, the vets and all the assistants in the poultry farms. Don't forget God who created all these.

Now think of your boss or similar office personages whose avowed purpose is to make your life difficult. With your very sharp knife cut up the chicken into serving sizes. Make sure to sever all the joints neatly, using firm, well-placed downward slicing motions. Remove the skin from the cut pieces of chicken (leave the skin on if you want to stay true to the original French recipe). Discard the cholesterol-ridden skin.

More pleasant task

Cutting the chicken up is the most difficult part of the recipe and should rid you of any angst you may have brought home with you. Proceed now with the more pleasant task of the actual cooking.

Peel and slice the garlic very finely, reminiscing on the accomplishments of your life. You have done many good things in your career (discard for the meantime instances when you put your foot in your mouth). You have helped many people along in their careers. You have been kind and considerate. You must take time off to appreciate yourself even for just this brief moment.

Extend your meditation to the washing of the parsley and its extra fine mincing. The color green is the color of promise. Life has many good things in store for you. Green is the symbol of life. Visualize the countryside vegetation. The mountains are green with trees and the cool mountain air is bracing. Take a deep whiff of it.

Snap back to attention. Heat oven to 400°. Heat the olive oil in a skillet over medium heat. Add the *pancetta* or Italian bacon and cook for about a minute, stirring occasionally. Add chicken and season with salt and pepper. In life there is always good and evil. It is how God created life. Just as the salt and pepper combine in the dish, it becomes obvious that life is the process of knowing how to keep ingredients in correct balance. Live life to the fullest. Find enjoyment in every moment. You are happy when you decide to be happy.

Scatter garlic in the pan. Turn over the chicken pieces after about 10 minutes or when the chicken turns brown. Season again and cook until the pieces are browned all over. Add the wine to deglaze the pan. Raise heat to "high" and reduce sauce to about 1 tablespoon. Turn off heat and stir in vinegar. Lovingly spoon sauce, *pancetta* and garlic bits over chicken. Cover pan and bake in oven for about 40 minutes or until chicken is fork tender.

Wine for the wait

Sip the remaining wine while waiting for the chicken to be cooked. You are in control of your life. It takes work, hard work, to be disciplined and to discipline your chicken, but you have come far and achieved a lot. Remember your first job. Look where you are now. Look into the pan where the chicken is baking. Think of how the chicken looked half an hour ago and see how delicious it looks now! Your wife and kids will be so proud of you. You're cooking an old traditional French chicken recipe. Clean up your mess. Set up the dining table as you enjoy the wine and think these thoughts.

Remove the pan from the oven. Transfer chicken to a serving platter. Garnish chicken with the chopped parsley and serve hot with steamed rice or fresh French bread and a simple cucumber and tomato salad.

If you would like to get more into slow food there is an actual group in Manila dedicated to preserving and supporting traditional ways of growing, producing and preparing food. Founded in Italy in 1986, The Slow Food Convivium is headed by Pia Lim-Castillo, who can be contacted for inquiries on membership through e-mail: foodtravel@pldtdsl.net. You'll be in the company of an eclectic blend of restaurateurs, chefs, environmentalists, writers and researchers such as Gaita Fores, Ed Quimson, Jessie Sincioco, Luigi Bernas, Leny de Borja, Mara Pardo de Tavera, Ipat Luna and Beth Romualdez.

Eat slow food. Be happy. Live long.

> 'Cutting the chicken up is the most difficult part of the recipe and should rid you of any angst you may have brought home with you'

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Text **EVENT PONDSSKED to 2209** to download the tour schedule.

MALL SPA

Dec. 4-5 Robinsons Place, Manila
Dec. 9-15 SM North

CEBU BUS SPA

Dec. 3 SWU, CSJR, UV, Cebu Doc., Waterfront, Cityhall
Dec. 4 Cebu Normal Colleges, University of Cebu, Fuente Osmeña
Dec. 5 SM Cebu, Gaisano, Ayala Mall, Town Plaza

Not yet a member? Text **CLUB to 2209**

All text to 2209 is free.

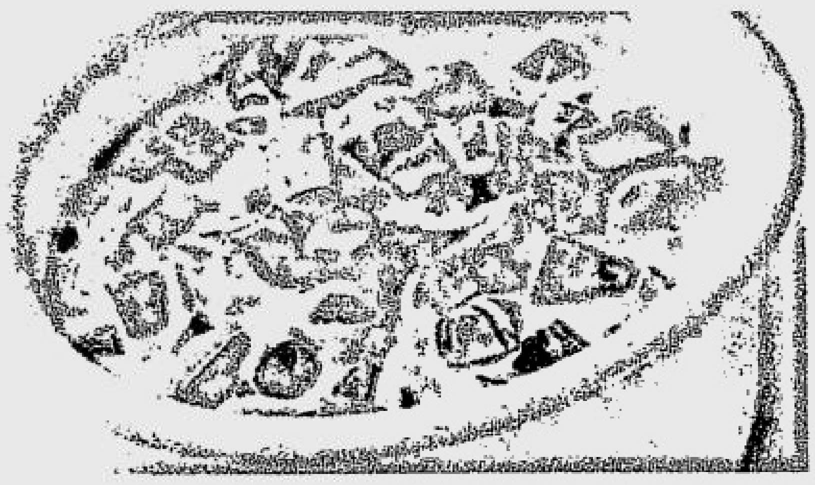
making great things possible for her Globe HANDYPHONE

A PORTION of every peso spent at Cabalen this December will go to a fund for poor children.

MORCON

RELLENONG Bangus

LECHON de Leche



BUKO Pandan Salad

Eat all you can and make poor children happy

EAT and help the less fortunate children this holiday season.

Cabalen, the "Eat-All-You Can, Eat-All-You Want" restaurant, will again hold its annual fund-raiser the whole month of December.

With the project "Cabalen Para sa Kabataan," which is now on its eighth year, the restaurant sets aside a percentage of every centavo earned the entire month for less fortunate children.

In previous years, beneficiaries of Cabalen's annual fund-raiser were destitute children in Pampanga, Malabon and Pasig. Money earned during this year's month-long fund-raiser will be used to provide for the needs of poor students in public schools.

Actual gift-giving is set for February.

Cabalen invites everyone to take part in this project to help the less fortunate. By dining at any Cabalen outlet during the whole month of December, you will be sharing a little of yourself with poor children.

The more often you eat at Cabalen this holiday season, the more you are able to share your blessings.

Specialties for December include Lechon de Leche, Cabalen Morcon, Rellenong Bangus, Steamed Fish in Mayo, Buco Pandan Salad, Hot Native Chocolates and Bibingka.

You can also enjoy other year-round specialties like Kare-Kare, Kalderetang Baka, Sisig, Chicken Asado, Inihaw na Hito with Burong Hipon, Bopis, Tapang Kalabaw, Tibok-tibok and Cabalen Halo-halo, and many more.

Cabalen restaurants are at 67 West Avenue, QC; 2/L, SM City North Edsa, QC; 4/L SM Megamall B, Mandaluyong City; 2/L Robinsons Place, Ermita, Manila; Glorietta 3, Makati City; 2/L, SM City, Manila; G/L Robinsons Starmills, San Fernando, Pampanga; Brickroad Area, Sta. Lucia East Grand Mall; and the Village Square, Harrison Plaza, Manila.

Visit www.cabalenrestaurant.com or call 9111584. For catering, call 4219220 or 9135522.

Kenny Rogers Roasters
BULK ORDER & CATERING
Christmas Saver Meals
KRISPY Saver Meal 1 P99 save P19.40
KRISPY Saver Meal 2 P129 save P31.00
ROASTED Saver Meal 1 P109 save P24.10
ROASTED Saver Meal 2 P199 save P22.65
CHECK OUT WHAT ELSE IS IN-STORE FOR YOU THIS HOLIDAY SEASON...
5% DISCOUNT on delivery prices of regular meals for parties to be held within December 2004. MINIMUM PURCHASE REQUIREMENT: P10,000
10% DISCOUNT on delivery prices of regular meals for parties to be held within November 2004. MINIMUM PURCHASE REQUIREMENT: P10,000
P500 WORTH OF GIFT CERTIFICATES to be given to last year's guests who will sign bulk order contract amounting to P10,000 & up. on or before Nov. 30, 2004
**Add P10.00 to change orange juice to softdrink in can.
Prices inclusive of VAT and 10% delivery charge.
Minimum requirement: 100 packs per delivery.
Promo period: Nov. 1, 2004 - Jan. 15, 2005. Not valid with any other promo offer.
For inquiries, please call BULK ORDER & CATERING DEPARTMENT at 817-0748/43 or visit any Kenny Rogers Roasters outlet near you.

DAVID
Sunflower Seeds
ORIGINAL
Pixy Stix
RED VINES
GUSHERS
Trident
Trident
Trident
Trident

A VARIETY of special products are available at Cost-U-Less.

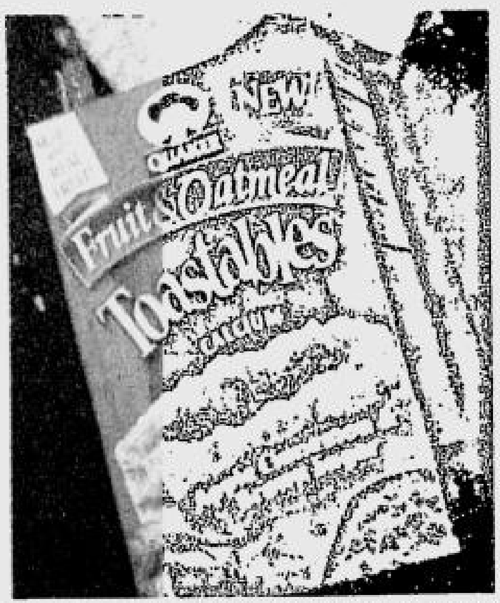
New 'warehouse' store opens today

COST-U-LESS (CUL) Philippines joins the growing warehouse shopping business in the country when it opens today on C-5 in Libis, QC.

Edmund Ross Tan Thelmo and Randy Labrecque, CUL Philippines president and chief operating officer, respectively, assure that shoppers will get the best deals in town. The store will have the widest selection of goods, with everything sold at the best value. CUL will offer some 10,000 items that will be sold in smaller packs.

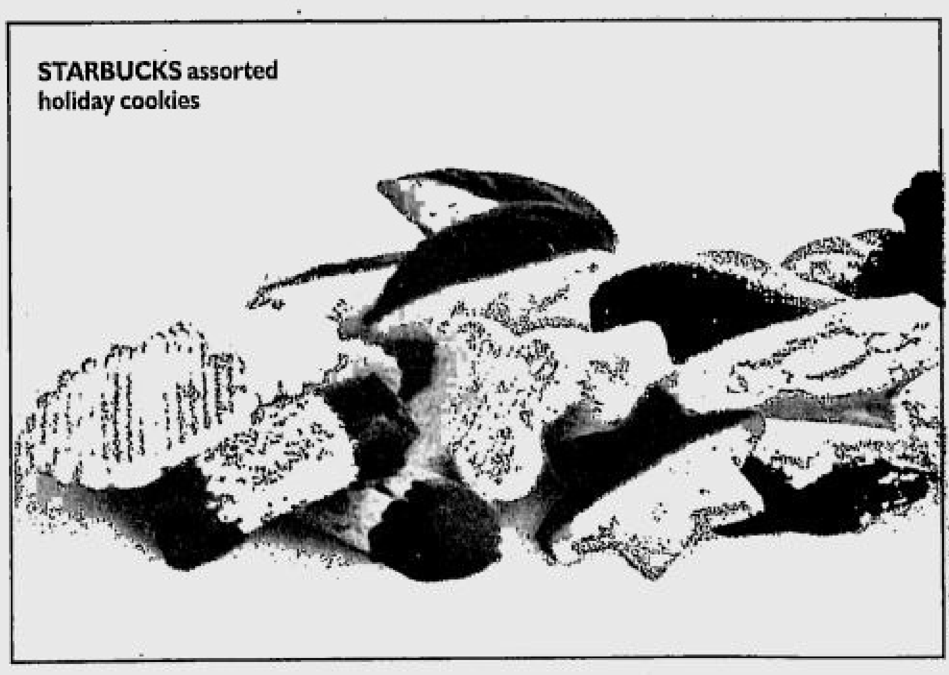
The store also has a no-membership policy and will not impose additional charges on credit card transactions.

CUL has also developed a system to allow for direct customer feedback. Thelmo and Labrecque promise that the company will continuously work to ensure customer satisfaction and to fine-tune its system.



Cheerios
SUNSWEET
DRIED PLUMS

Wish Bone
57
LOUISIANA



STARBUCKS assorted holiday cookies

STARBUCKS Rhumba Chocolate Chip Cookies with Walnuts

A gift of tradition

MAKE someone merrier this season with the Starbucks Traditions Gift Packs.

You can choose from five pastries that include the traditional Christmas Shortbread Cookies, handmade cookies with a sweet buttery taste that go well with Starbucks Christmas Toffee Nut Latte or Peppermint Mocha; the Chocolate Almond Brittle, a blend of almonds, crunchy brittle and luscious chocolate; the Starbucks Rhumba Chocolate Chip Cookies with walnuts and chocolate chips, best paired with Starbucks Christmas Blend.

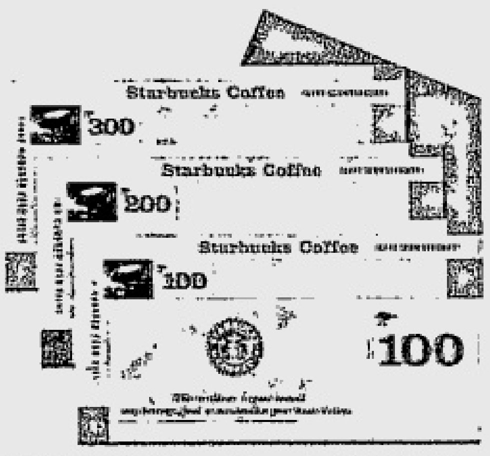
For the child at heart, there is the Starbucks Holiday Bearista Bears Gift Box. Each box has three pairs of the exclusive Starbucks Bearista Bears dressed in Santa finery.

The Starbucks Assorted German Holiday Cookies consist of seven different kinds of cookies: German Fruit Honey, Nut Cracker, Choco Cinnamon Star, German Nut, Nutty Spice, Nut Leaves and Swiss Butter.

If you can't decide, give the gift of Starbucks for P295. The Starbucks Traditions Gift Box comes in a special red and silver box.

You can also buy gift certificates in P100, P200 and P300 denominations from a Starbucks store near you.

CHRISTMAS Shortbread Cookies



STARBUCKS gift certificates in P100, P200 and P300 denominations

Classes on holiday cooking

THE MAYA Kitchen class on Dec. 4, will cover recipes suitable for the holiday spread and gift-giving.

"Noche Buena Fare," 9 a.m.-1 p.m., will include Pork Ham, Chicken Ham, Cassava Bibingka, Sapin-sapin, Salabat, Cuchinta, Putong Puti and, as bonus, Maya Bibingka.

Also to be conducted at 9 a.m.-1 p.m. is the class on "Regional Pinoy Cooking" that will offer recipes from all over the country such as La Paz Bachoy, Kilawin Kapampangan, Chicken Inasal (Bacolod style), Bulalong Davao, Adobong Crispy Pata and Ilocos Bagnet (Lechon Kawali).

Learn how to make homemade desserts in "Cookies and More" at 1:30-5 p.m. To be taught are Holiday Cookies, Boat Tarts, Fruitcake Bars, assorted Brownies, Food for the Gods, among others. Costing and packaging ideas included.

Also at 1:30-5:30 p.m. is the class on "Edible Food Gifts." Make your own holiday presents like Chicken Liver Pate, Roasted Bell Pepper Pate, Smoked Cheese Pate, Homemade Herbed Cheese Spread, Vegetable Chips with Dips. The class will cover packaging and coasting.

Visit the Maya Kitchen (Tuesday to Saturday), 8/F, Liberty Building, A. Arnaiz Avenue (formerly Pasay Road), Makati City, or call 8921185/5011 local 108. E-mail mkitchen@ultilmate.info.com.ph.

It's A Children's Christmas at the Shang

'Twas the month of
Christmas and all
through the Shang,

Children squealed
and laughed
and the caroling bells
rang!

'Cause 'tis a small
world this Christmas,
at your favorite mall,

With treats and
surprises for one
and all!

Holiday Sights and Sounds
at the Grand Atrium, Level 2

Alitaptap presents
"Stories Connect the World"
with Award-winning Storyteller
Ms. Dianne de Las Casas
December 3, Friday, 2pm

Countdown to Christmas Concert with
De La Salle University (DLSU) Pops Orchestra
December 4, Saturday, 6pm

"Cinderella"
Interactive Musical Storytelling with
Kids Act Philippines
December 11, Saturday, 5pm

"It's A Small World Christmas" at the Shang
Presented by Trumpets
December 5, 12, 26 & January 2, Sunday, 4:30pm
December 21, Tuesday, 4:30pm

San Miguel Philharmonic Orchestra &
The San Miguel Master Chorale
December 16, Thursday, 7pm

"It's a Children's Christmas"
with Ms. Pops Fernandez &
the Philippine Children's Choir of Mandaluyong
December 17, Friday, 7pm

"A Very Jerry Christmas"
with Cartoon Network
December 19, Sunday, 10am

Christmas Caravan
with Effie Nañas Dancentre
December 22, Wednesday, 6pm

A Classical Christmas Concert
with Acoustic Perfection
December 24, Friday, 4pm

Deck the Halls with Gifts and Music
at the Art Plaza, Level 4

It's A Wrap with Wrap Shop
Christmas Gift Wrapping Session
December 3, Friday, 4pm

Christmas Wrap Up
Gift Wrapping Session
with National Bookstore and Hallmark
December 10, Friday, 4pm

A Classical Christmas Concert with
Acoustic Perfection
December 17, Friday, 4pm
December 22, Wednesday, 4pm

Heavenly Voices Come A-Caroling

Chiang Kai Shek Children's Choir
Level 3
December 4, Saturday, 3pm

University of the East (UE) Chorale
Art Plaza, Level 4
December 4, Saturday, 4pm

Ateneo Chamber Singers
Art Plaza, Level 4
December 11, Saturday, 4pm

Philippine Children's Choir of Mandaluyong
Level 3
December 12, Sunday, 3pm

Philippine Madrigal Singers
Level 3
December 18, Saturday, 4pm

Tiples ng Makati
Level 3
December 19, Sunday, 3pm

Kilyawan Boy's Choir
Level 3
December 26, Sunday, 3pm

Shopping Hours for a Merry Holiday

December 8-23
Extended Mall Hours 10am - 10pm
December 24 and 31 10am - 7pm
December 26-30
Regular Mall Hours 10am - 9pm
December 25 and January 1, 2005
Mall Closed

Jingle Bell Rockin' at the Streetscope

Starts at 9:30pm
December 3 Oona
December 4 Acoustic Jive with May Bayot

Starts at 10pm
December 10 Fresh Mix
December 11 REtroSPECT
December 17 FreeVerse
December 18 John Y Cash & The Jukebox
December 30 Pre-New Year's Party with Dimsum & D'Soul

Shangri-La Plaza
Life's a thrill

BSP acts on credit collectors' abuses

Collection agents seem to be relentless, doing everything—fair and foul—to force debtors to pay up

THE CONSUMER
Marietta Velasco Giron

RUDE credit card collectors beware. If and when the amended circulars of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) about credit card operations are fully implemented, harassment and other forms of abuses by collection agencies will be considered violations of the provisions of the Unfair Collection Practices regulation.

Harassment by credit card collectors used to rank high in the list of consumer complaints in our e-mail box. Based on readers' letters, collection agents seemed to be relentless, doing everything—fair and foul—to force debtors to pay up.

The last letter we received was from a distraught mother who asked for help because a collection agent was scaring her young daughter. The agent told the young girl that unless her mom paid her debt, they were going to lose their house.

Earlier, we received a complaint from a reader about a collector who called up her officemates and told them about her unpaid credit card bill. Another letter writer griped that his credit card collector brazenly visited his neighborhood and discussed his debt with his neighbors.

Here is the list of "unscrupulous or untoward acts" (words are from the circular signed Sept. 24 by Armando L. Suratos, officer in charge of the BSP Monetary Board):

- Use or threat of violence, or other criminal means to harm a person physically, his reputation and/or property
- Use of obscenities, insults, or profane language which amount(s) to a criminal act or offense under applicable laws
- Disclosure of the names of credit cardholders who allegedly refuse to pay their debts (with exceptions)
- Threat to take any extra-legal action
- Communicating or threat to communicate to any person credit information known to be false, including withholding the information that a debt is being disputed
- Any false representation or use of deceptive means to collect or attempt to collect any debt or to obtain information concerning a cardholder, and
- Making contact at unreasonable/inconvenient times or hours, defined as contact before 6 a.m. or after 10 p.m., unless the account is past due for more than 60 days or the cardholder has given express permission or said times are the only reasonable or convenient opportunities for contact.

No return-no exchange

Sad to say, in spite of the consumer protection law, the rule of the game at *tiangges* is "buy at your own risk." You won't get a refund or a replacement at most stalls or booths if you find out when you get home that your purchase is defective. So open your eyes and check your goods carefully and thoroughly before parting with your money. Be forewarned and you will save yourself a lot of trouble.

Reader Ria Berbano shares her experience. She wrote, "Our househelp was delighted with the Nokia battery she bought in one of the stalls at the Manila City Plaza in Quiapo. The battery could last on stand-by mode for four days (when) fully charged.

"Her friend, upon knowing this, bought a spare battery at another store. She wasn't as lucky. Her first battery did not work and the replacement she got was defective. When she returned to the store for the third time, she was advised by the seller to charge the battery for eight hours before use. It did not work, either. The worst part of it was, the seller refused to give her another replacement, much less give her a refund despite the purchase receipt she presented.

"With this experience, I hope your readers can warn their respective house helpers from being cheated in the future," Berbano wrote.

Hazardous batteries

Mike Silva, a consumer protection advocate, sent us the following warning he downloaded from the website of Apple computers: "Watch out for certain lithium ion rechargeable batteries for 15-inch PowerBook G4 (aluminum) notebook. Apple (corporation) is voluntarily recalling these batteries sold worldwide from January to August 2004. Batteries could overheat and pose a fire hazard."

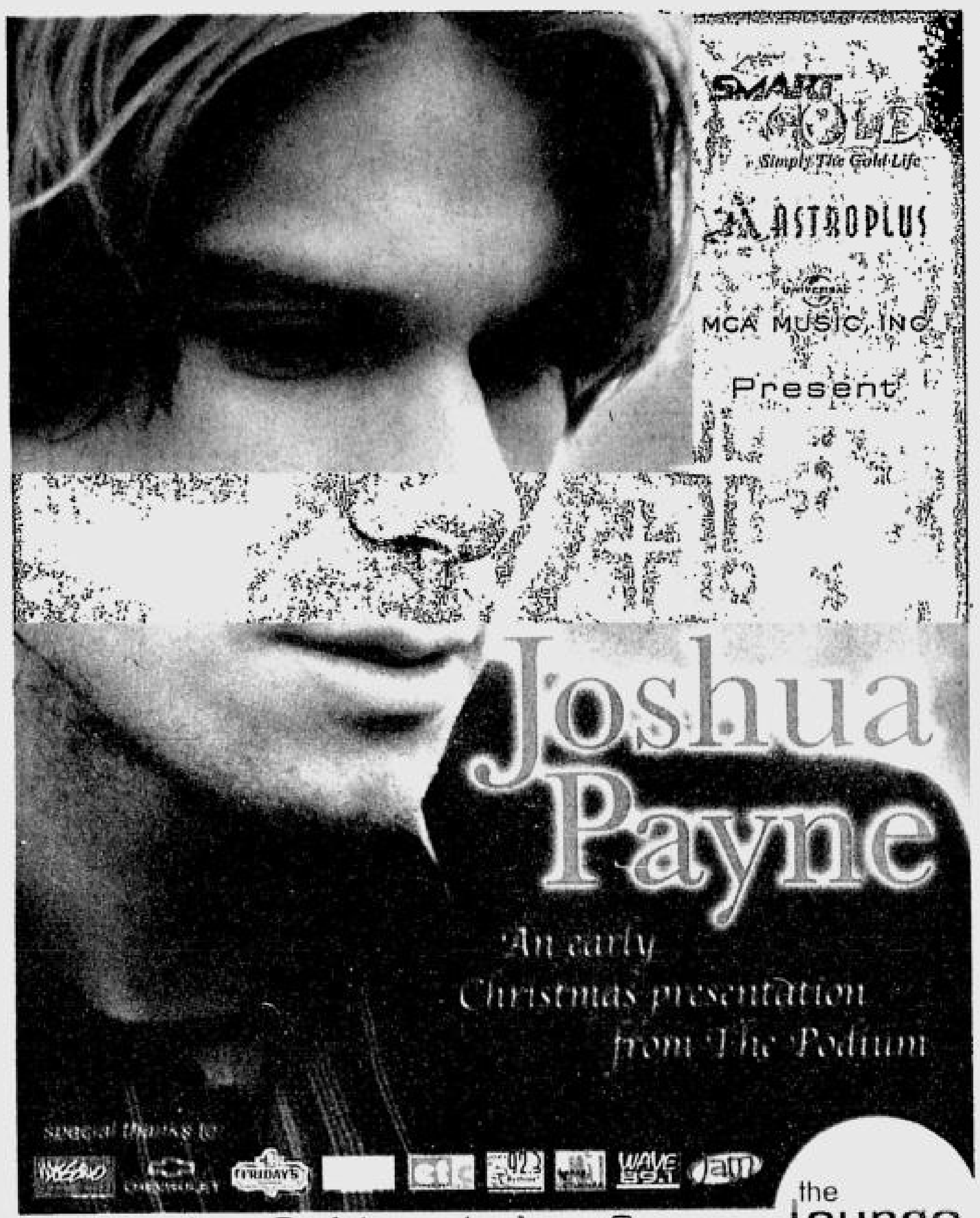
And speaking of batteries, here's a warning we came across while browsing the Consumer Reports publication. "Kyocera (company) is recalling more than 100,000 batteries used to power its Smartphone cell phone 7135 because they could short-circuit, overheat and possibly explode."

The batteries were sold September to December 2003 at certain retail stores in the United States. The recalled batteries are black with the red and white Kyocera label on the front. It has a product code ending in "05 on the underside."

We felt we should mention these warnings considering the fact that our market is a big dumping ground for imported used, reused and rejected products. As the saying goes, forewarned is forearmed.

For more information on the hazardous cellular phone batteries, go to the www.kyocera-wireless.com.

E-mail author at mgiron@i-manila.com.ph.



December 2 (thursday) • 6pm
the lounge 2nd level
THE PODIUM
ADB AVENUE ORTIGAS CENTER MANDALUYONG CITY

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The Maestro, equipped with no more than devotion and passion, is today a force to reckon with in the culinary world

CHEF Ariel Manuel with his awards

The possible dream

Part II

KITCHEN RESCUE

Reggie Aspiras

CHEF Ariel Manuel's story is not typical. A job in the kitchen wasn't his career choice. He also did not go to chef school.

It all happened by accident, a very happy one for all of us who know him and work with him. The Maestro, equipped with no more than devotion and passion, is today a force to reckon with in the culinary world. His restaurant, Lolo Dad's, remains one of the country's finest.

My painfully shy and soft spoken colleague shares his story with Kitchen Rescue.

Is the dream of being a chef possible with limited funds?

Yes, for as long as you are devoted. It takes devotion. You have to work hard to fulfill your dreams.

What made you decide to be a chef?

I was moved from the rooms division (at the Hyatt) to the kitchen and fell in love with it.

How did you start?

No formal training. I started from scratch. My career started at the Hyatt as a room boy. I was then a self-supporting student taking up architecture.

When I moved to the kitchen, I fell in love with the art of food preparation. I was intrigued by the cold kitchen and ice carving. Afterward, I moved to the Peninsula's Chesa and was trained by my first mentor, chef Tony Palermo.

When the Shangri-La opened, I took my chances and was hired. From there I moved to The Heritage, then to the Mandarin. I was promoted from *chef de partie* to *sous chef* of the Tivoli. It was there that I met my great mentor, chef Norbert Gandler.

My last hotel job was at the Westin Philippine Plaza.

In 1999, I decided to move on and, together with my wife Mia, opened Lolo Dad's.

What advice would you give those who want to pursue this career?

Stay focused. I would advise them to apply in hotels or restaurants. For me, you get the best training in hotels. The standards are higher. Being able to learn from chefs from all over the world makes a big difference.

Work from the bottom up. You need as much exposure and training as possible. To be a chef needs a lot of interest and hard work. The job must be taken seriously!

To whom do you owe your success?

To my mentors, chef Tony Palmero and (my great mentor) chef Norbert Gandler, who allowed me to practice my culinary skills and develop my leadership abilities.

To what do you owe your success?

Dedication, passion.

Final words?

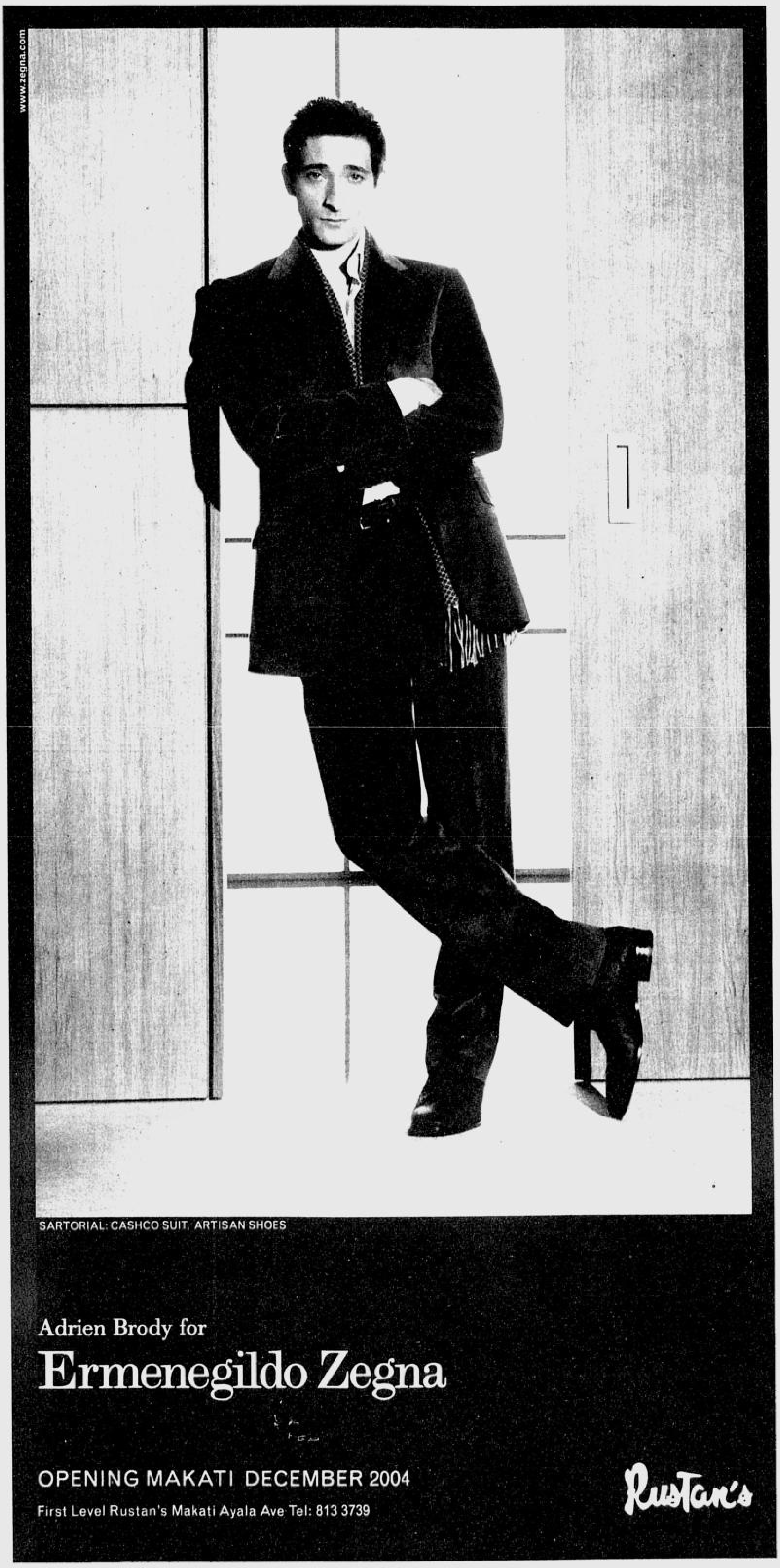
It is a vocation!

Spaghetti aglio e olio

Spaghetti + oil + garlic is a classic though it hardly finds its way to fancy restaurant menus. It

THE POSSIBLE/ D3

CHEF Ariel's sampler of the appetizers on the menu of Lolo Dad's



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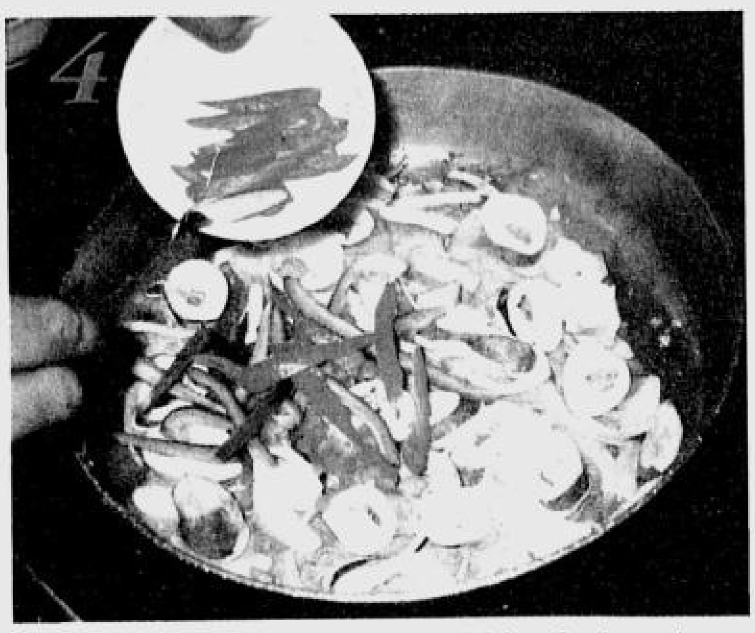
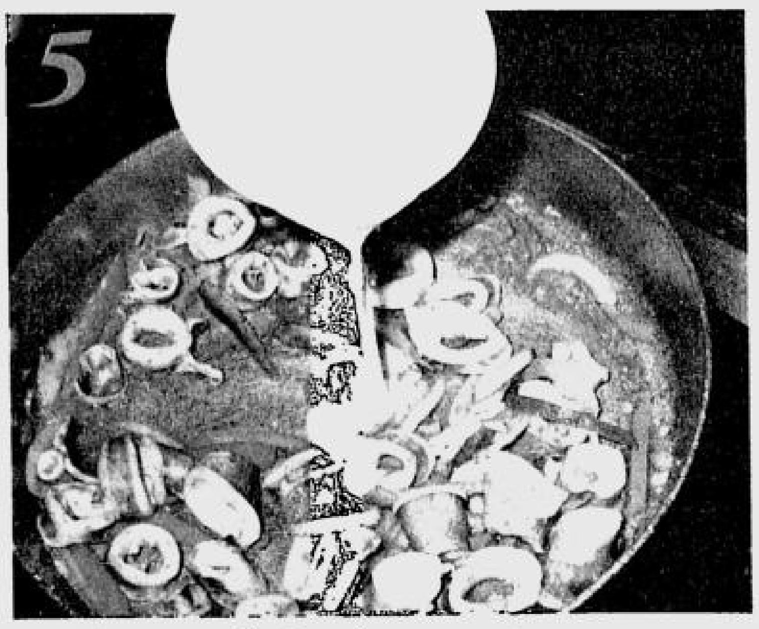
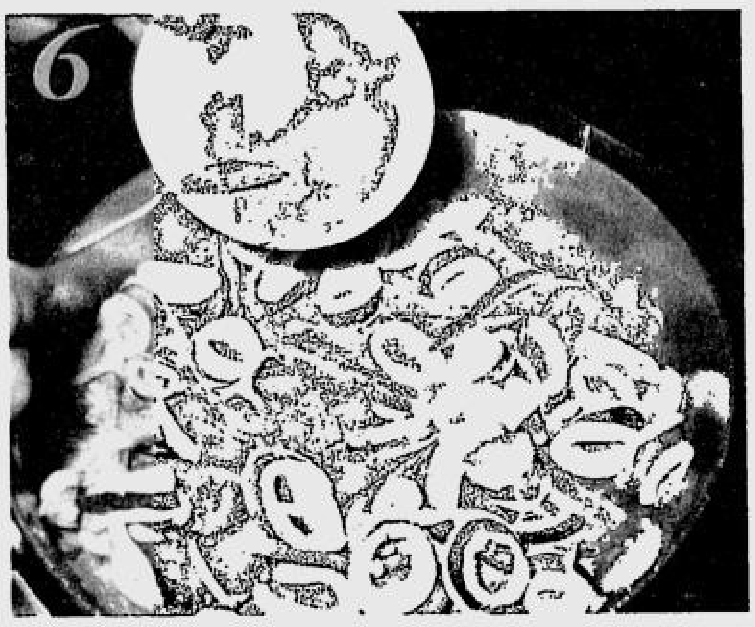
ABOUT TIME SODAS WENT FRUITY!


ADD bell pepper and tomato and cook in high heat for three minutes.


POUR the coconut milk. Stir well.

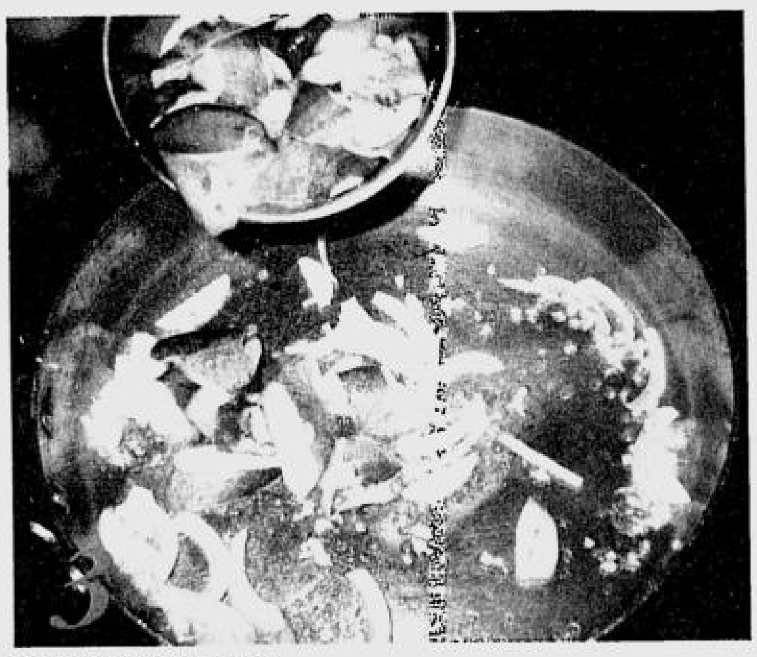

ADD curry powder and *siling labuyo*.

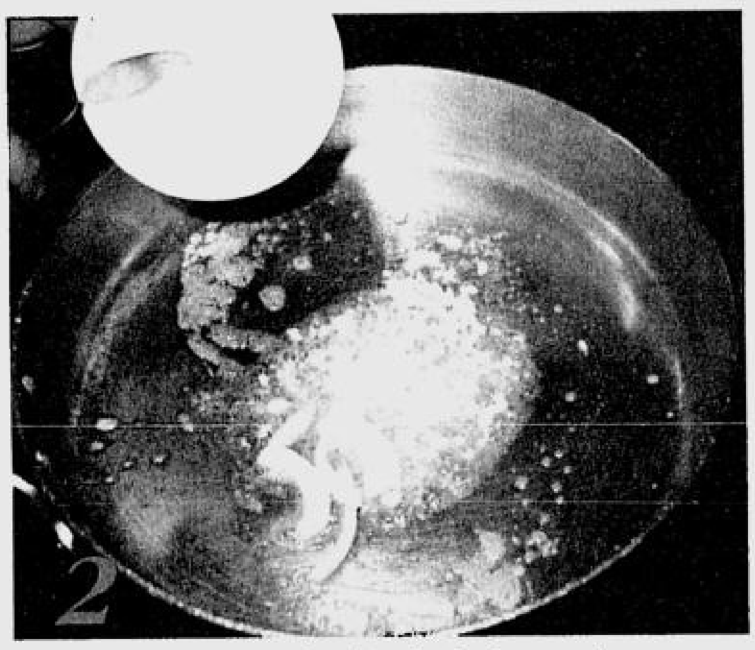
Squid with a zing

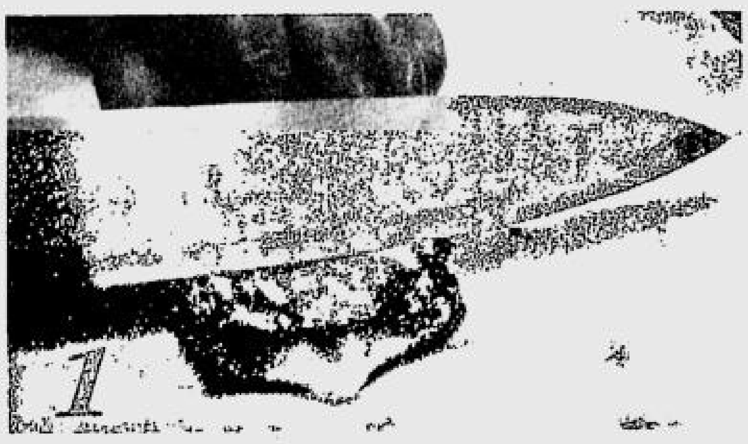
With chili and curry powder, this flavorful dish has to be treated with respect

Text by Vangie Baga-Reyes
Photos by Roger Carpio

STEP BY STEP


SLOWLY add squid rings.


HEAT butter in a pan. Sauté garlic and onion for two minutes.


WASH squid, pat dry and cut into rings.

SQUID, either served as an appetizer or entrée, can make a superb dish provided it is fresh and cooked correctly. As everyone knows, old, overcooked squid can be chewier than bubble gum.

"Squid is naturally tough but it has a flavor all its own," says chef Amador Cruz of Blue Bay Buffet by the Bay. "There are so many ways to prepare squid and it's always best to cook it with different seasonings."

Squid Piquant is one recipe that brings out the natural taste and flavor of this seafood. The squid is cut into rings and sautéed in garlic and onion. Curry powder and coconut milk make the dish more robust and savory.

Chef Cruz demonstrates how this dish is prepared with very little time required. "The zingy taste of Squid Piquant comes from chilies in the sauce, and the flavor of curry powder complements the tomatoes, bell pepper and coconut milk in the recipe," he says.

Although squid is ideal for this recipe, you can also substitute any fish of your choice.

Make sure to clean the squid thoroughly before cooking. Hold the body of squid firmly in one hand and grasp the head firmly with the other. Pull head, twisting gently from side to side. Head and contents of body should come away in one piece.

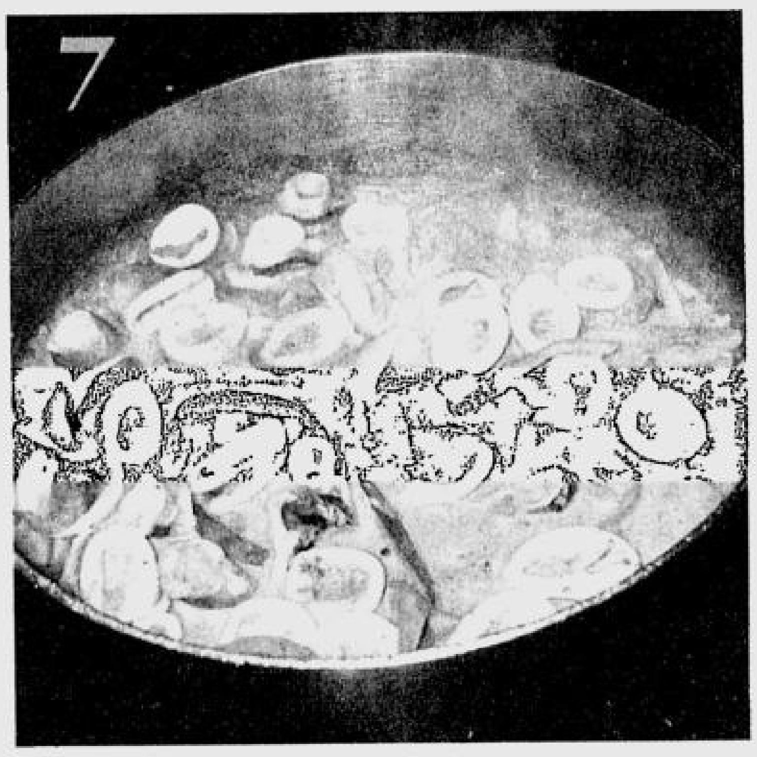
Cut off tentacles. Discard head and contents of body. Grasp the tip of pointed, thin, clear cartilage protruding from the body; pull out and discard. Rinse thoroughly the inside of the squid's body under running water to remove any grit or extraneous matter. Wash under cold running water and dry thoroughly.

Blue Bay Buffet by the Bay (tels. 4007437, 5250514) is on South Road (T.M. Kalaw) corner Parade St., Luneta, Rizal Park, Manila.

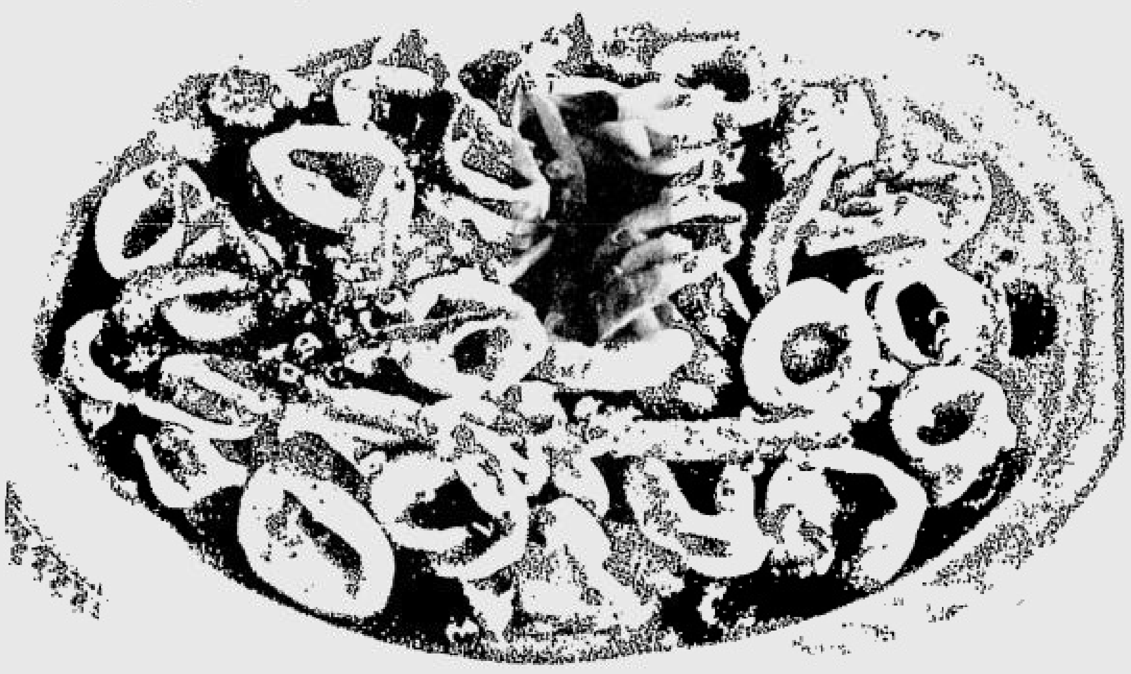
Ingredients

4 tbsp butter
50 g garlic
200 g onion
1 kg squid, cleaned and cut into rings
100 g red bell pepper
100 green bell pepper
1 tbsp curry powder
100 g tomato
3 pc chili *labuyo*
Salt and pepper to taste
1 can coconut milk

For suggestions, e-mail the author at vbaga@inquirer.com.ph.


ADD salt and pepper. Let simmer for 1 minute.

SQUID Piquant



Holiday cooking made easy

MAKE holiday food preparation a little easier on yourself with Jolly's ready-to-use ingredients.

Here are a few recipes you can try with Jolly products:

Christmas Beef Roulade stuffed with Red and Green Bell Pepper and Corn in Mushroom Sauce

Serves 6

1 kg beef sirloin or striploin (cut ¼ inch thin and wide)
Salt and pepper to taste
1 c flour
½ c Jolly Canola Oil
For stuffing:
1 c red bell pepper (cut in thin strips)
1 c green bell pepper (cut in thin strips)
1 c Jolly Whole Corn Kernels
1 c cheese (any kind, grated)
For sauce:
2 tbsp butter
1 tbsp garlic (minced)
1 c onions (small diced)
1 c Jolly Whole Mushrooms (cut in slices)
1 can Jolly Cream of Mushroom
Salt and pepper to taste
Garnish:
1 c green and red bell pepper (diced)
2 tbsp basil (chopped)

Spread the thinly sliced beef on a clean plate and layer with salt and pepper, sliced bell peppers, corn kernels and the grated cheese then roll together to form a wrap. Secure ends with toothpick so the stuffing won't ooze out. Don't put too much stuffing. Set aside in refrigerator.

Making the sauce: Melt butter in a saucepan over medium heat. Sauté garlic and onions until golden brown.

Add whole mushrooms and cook for 2 more minutes or until brown. Add the cream of mushroom then simmer. Adjust seasoning if needed. Set aside.

Cook the beef by heating ½ c canola oil in a pan until the heat reaches medium high. Add salt and pepper to the beef then coat lightly all sides with flour. Sear meat until brown on all sides. Do not overcook. This should take only a few minutes.

Reheat the sauce. Transfer the cooked pieces of beef and let simmer in the sauce for 1 minute. Add the garnishes then serve.

Napoleon of Fruit Cocktail in Whipped Cream drizzled with Santa's Strawberry Syrup

2 sheets of puff pastry*
1 can Jolly Fruit Cocktail Royale
1 c fresh or frozen strawberries**
2 tbsp sugar
2 tbsp water
1 c heavy cream
1 tbsp sugar
Garnish: (optional)
1 tbsp coco powder
Mint sprigs

For a fruitier dessert treat, you can add Jolly Mandarin Oranges, Jolly Lychee and Jolly Maraschino Cherries.

Divide 1 puff pastry sheet into 8 equal triangles making 16 triangles .

Preheat oven to 400°F. Layer the triangles and bake for 5-10 minutes or until golden brown and crispy.

In a chilled metal or glass bowl, add heavy cream (chilled) and whip until it has a thick consistency. Add 1 tbsp sugar and whisk to incorporate. Set aside in refrigerator.

In a saucepan, add 1 c strawberries, 2 tbsp sugar, 2 tbsp water and slowly simmer until strawberries are very soft, around 20 min. Add water if needed.

Using a fork, mash the soft strawberries until a thick consistency is achieved. If too thin, simmer for 5 minutes more, if too thick add a little water. Adjust sweetness if desired.

Drain the Fruit Cocktail Royale. To assemble: Layer 1 puff pastry triangle. Add whipped cream then add drained fruit cocktail. Repeat process until you have three layers of puff pastry.

Drizzle strawberry sauce around the Napoleon, serve immediately. Garnish with coco powder and mint sprigs.

*You can get puff pastry sheets in delis or supermarkets.

**You can use ready-made strawberry syrup or any other red-colored fruit-based syrup.

Crispy Chicken and Pork Gyoza with Hoi Sin Glaze

16 pc gyoza wrapper (found in groceries or Asian deli)
2 tbsp Jolly Canola Oil
For the filling:
180 g ground pork
90 g ground chicken
90 g cabbage, chopped
1 tsp ginger, minced
1 tbsp scallions, chopped
1 tbsp Good Life Oyster Sauce
½ tsp pepper
2 tsp Good Life Sesame Oil
1 egg, beaten
Hoi Sin glaze:
2 tbsp Good Life Hoi Sin
1 tbsp garlic
1 tsp ginger
2 tbsp water
1 tbsp Good Life Oyster Sauce

Combine all ingredients for the filling and mix well. Add 2 tsp of filling in gyoza wrapper. Fold and seal edges with a little water. Simmer water up to 1 inch in a pan then add gyoza to steam for 2 minutes. When water is fully evaporated, add the 2 tbsp of canola oil and fry until crisp or golden brown. Add canola oil if necessary.

For Hoi Sin glaze: Combine all ingredients then heat in a pan for 1 minute. Serve with Hoi Sin glaze or soy sauce with vinegar and chili.

CRISPY Chicken and Pork Gyoza with Hoi Sin Glaze

The possible dream

From page D1

is perhaps the equivalent of *sinangag* and has become popular as comfort food.

It's delicious, easy to prepare and goes well with other dishes. It is rather versatile and can be a base for many other pasta recipes.

Though easy to prepare, a good *aglio e olio* is hard to come by. I've gone from euphoria to duh?! Tasteless, oily, salty, too spicy... Remember, this pasta should just be "glossed" with oil, not dripping with it!

Only six things go into this recipe—olive oil, dried chilies, garlic, parsley, salt and pepper, so make sure you use only the finest ingredients. The best extra virgin olive oil you can buy, preferably Italian. Young, fresh and unbruised garlic cloves, sliced as thinly as possible. Dried whole chilies or pepper flakes. Flat leaf parsley, makes a big difference. Salt, freshly ground pepper and freshly grated Parmigiano. Use only good quality Italian pasta.

Serve this dish immediately after cooking. It does not keep well!

I like mine with a lot of garlic, so adjust the quantities of garlic, chilies and parsley to suit you. Cook pasta at the very last minute, before tossing it into the oil mixture.

Ingredients:

1/3 c extra virgin olive oil
1/4 c garlic, sliced thinly
Dried chili, to taste (Chefs Nook, 220 Pilar St., Mandaluyong)
2 tbsp flat leaf parsley, chopped
Salt and pepper to taste
250-300 g cooked pasta

- What I do, I heat my oil with the chilies. When my oil is hot, I add my garlic and cook to the point that it is almost golden, not burnt! Then I add my parsley, toss in pasta, season to taste, run to the table with parmigiano to pass around, put my napkin on my lap, cross my legs, make the sign of the cross and say, "Bless us, oh Lord!" Okay, that's pushing it!
- My variations: 2-3 tsp anchovy paste or ½ c (or a combination to measure ½ c) of any of the following (sliced): basil, prawns, squid, scallops, arugula, cooked mussels or clams, lobster meat, crumbled *chorizo* or Italian sausage, drained canned tuna or tomatoes (cherry, fresh or sundried).

Christmas berries

For Sunday lunch, I ordered strawberries, the long-stemmed variety from Australia. They were close to the size of my fist, 12 berries to a kilo. I served them frozen with whipped cream and vanilla sugar.

The berries will be available throughout the season and make a beautiful addition to any Christmas table. Contact Claudine at (0917) 8958191.

For questions and comments, text (0917) 8399888.

Home-cooked gifts

THE REGGIE Aspiras School of Culinary Arts will offer the following classes:

Dec. 6—Christmas Morning (all new)—Diegos Muffin Basket (Orange, Blueberry, Cheese, Delicious Corn); Diegos Big Breakfast of Croissant French Toasts, Portobello Omelet and Breakfast Tacos with Delicious Homemade Pork and Beans; Waffles of Roast Beef Hash with Mushrooms, Eggs and Bacon, Cheesecake with Aioli; Fresh Fruit Salad

Dec. 7—Dips (all new; great as gifts)—Spinach, Sun-dried Tomato, Onion, Parmesan, Artichoke, Shrimp, Bean, Cheese, Balsamic and Garlic, Blue Cheese, and Caviar Dip; and Ways of Serving Dips (with toasts, points, fruits, bread, etc.)

Dec. 8—Make your own paté, terrine and gravlax (all new)—Make your own paté for the holidays! Great as gifts–Chicken Liver Paté (2 kinds): classic, with preserved fruit, or with mushrooms; Seafood Terrine; Gravlax (2 Kinds); Blinis, Toasts; and Points & Bread

Call 9289296, 9273008,6335162, or (0917) 8399888.

SHAKEY'S marks its 30th anniversary by introducing a new mascot, the Pizza Man, and opening another branch on Taft Avenue. At left, the Pizza Man is joined by IFFSI general manager Vic Gregorio and Jun Abrina, owner of Shakey's De La Salle University-Taft. For delivery, call 5338000.

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In the stylish world of compact digital cameras, Digital IXUS has once again set the trend in both form and function. Sheathed inside its sleek metallic body, is the powerful DIGIC II imaging processor which delivers the most stunning pictures. In addition, the superior Canon UA Lens (Ultra High Refractive Index Aspherical Lens) reduces colour dispersion to ensure sharp, brilliant and true colours. Despite its slimmer and more compact frame, the straight collapsible mount lens system ensures top optical performance for high image quality always. Take your pick from two cool designer looks and make the ultimate fashion statement now with the new IXUS 40/30.

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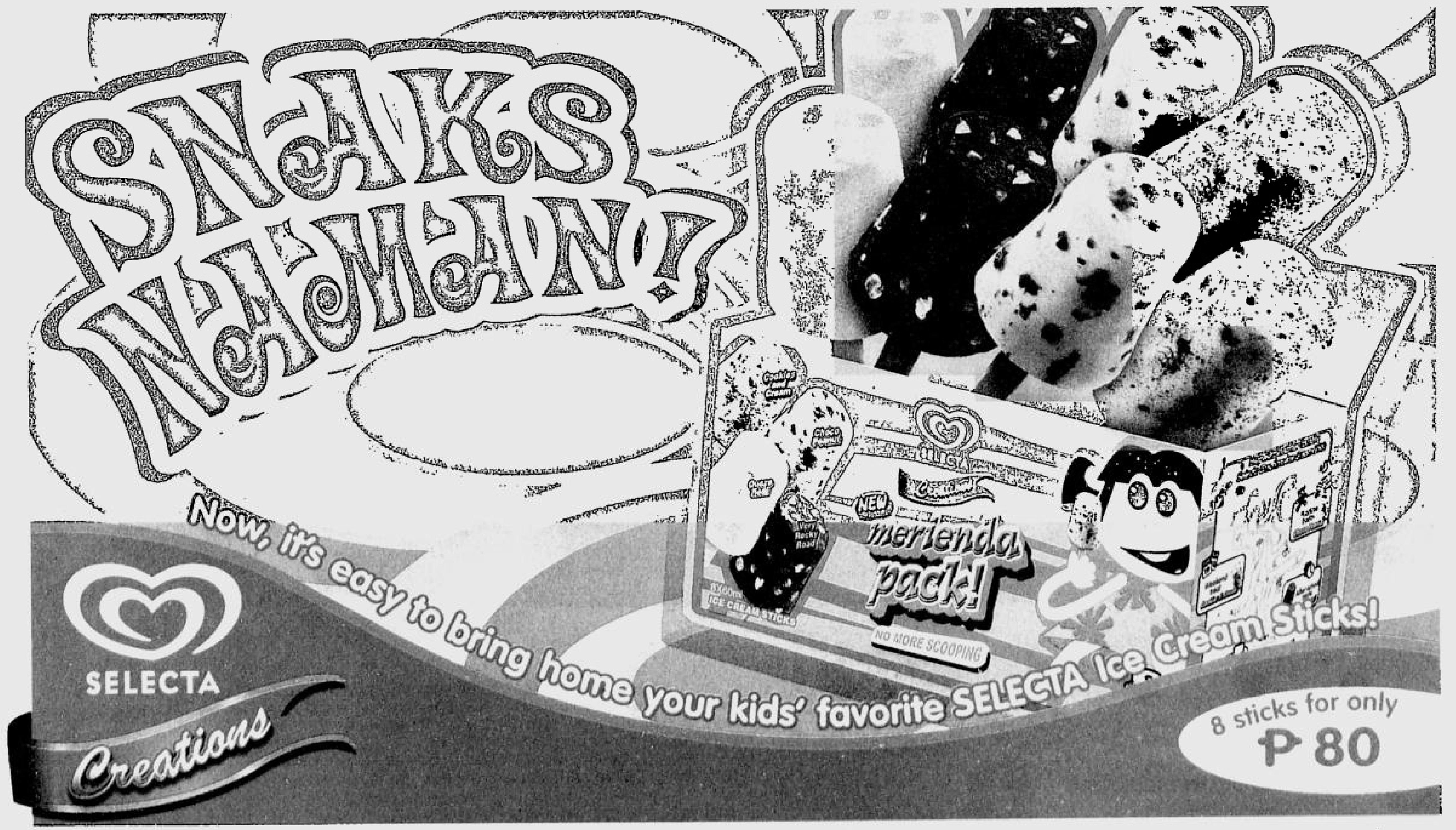

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Learn how to run a restaurant

A SEVEN-DAY "Managing a Restaurant/Canteen Seminar-Workshop" will be held 1-5 p.m., Dec. 1-9 (excluding weekends), at Eastwood City, Libis, QC.

The workshop, organized by MB&G/ProActive, is open to restaurateurs, hoteliers, resort and canteen operators, and those planning to open their own foodservice business.

It will cover topics such as planning the concept, menu, location, layout and equipment; hygiene and sanitation; human resource development; and cost control among others. MB&G/ProActive has been in the business of training foodservice executives and hospitality business owners since 1989.

Reservations are on first-come-first-serve basis. Call 6871787 or 0915-4315375.

Seminar fee is P5,000 per participant inclusive of manual and handouts, snacks, certificate of completion, and workshop materials and equipment.

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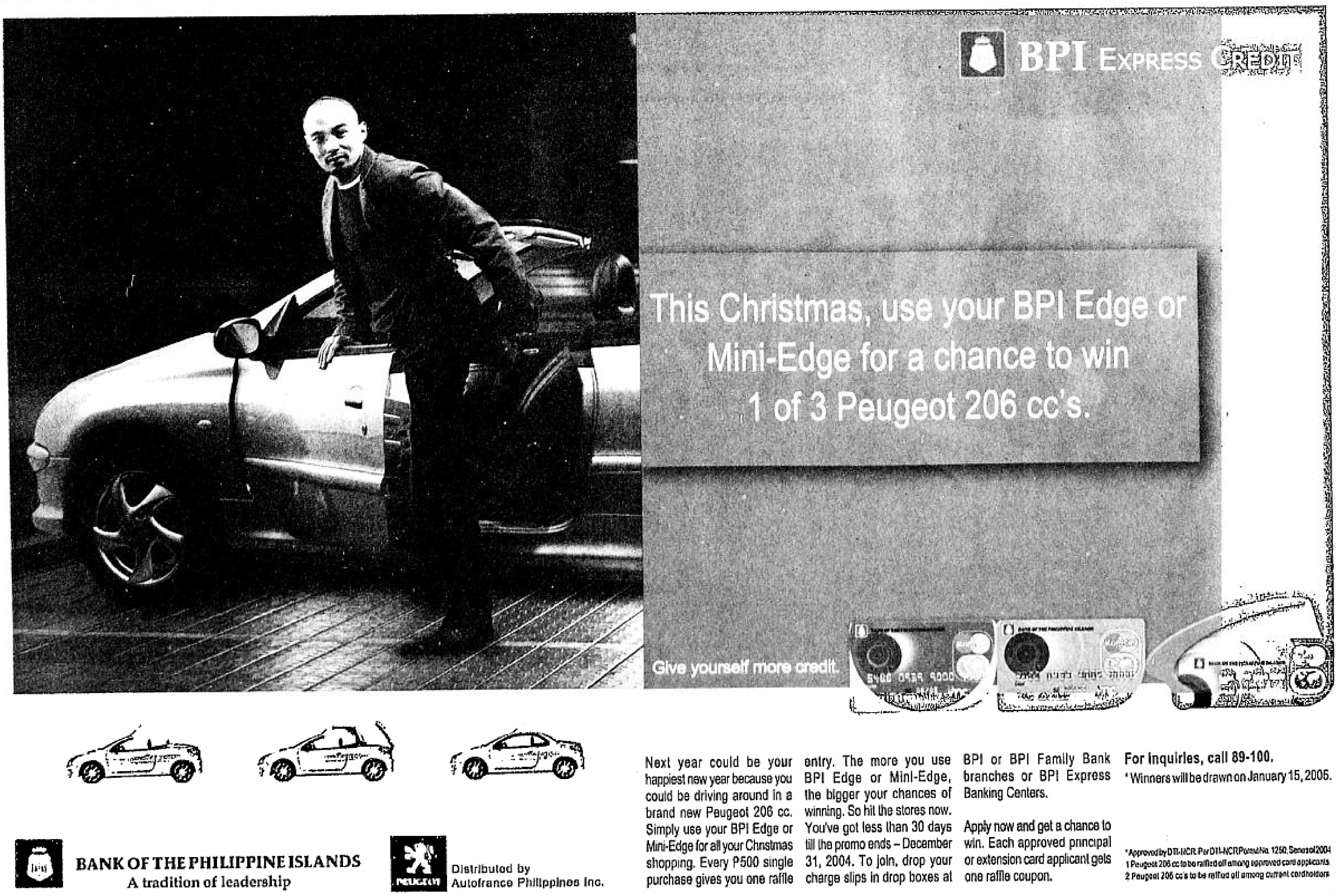
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For inquiries, call 89-100.

*Winners will be drawn on January 15, 2005.

*Approved by DTI-NCR. Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 1250, Series of 2004
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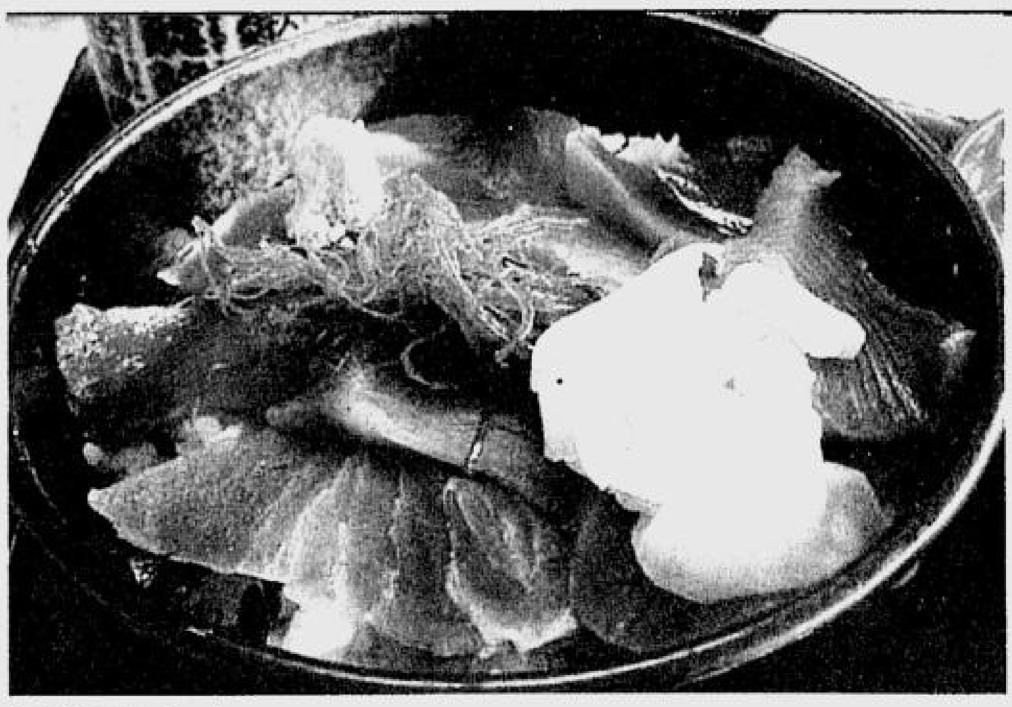

MAGURO Donburi at Tsukiji Fish Market in Tokyo

The other Japanese art

Text and photos by Janus Victoria
Contributor

IN JAPAN, food is as pleasing to the stomach as it is to the eyes. The Japanese take food preparation so seriously it is considered an art form. There's even an entire television show just on rating restaurants and it's hosted by one of Japan's popular boybands, V6. This is probably why food is quite

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See posters and print ads for details.
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Drop in drop boxes located at Ayala and Robinson's cinema lobbies, and all LBC and Netopia branches. You may also mail entries to: Guyito Wild Hunt, PDI Bldg., corner Yague and Mascardo Sts., Chino Roces Ave., Makati City.

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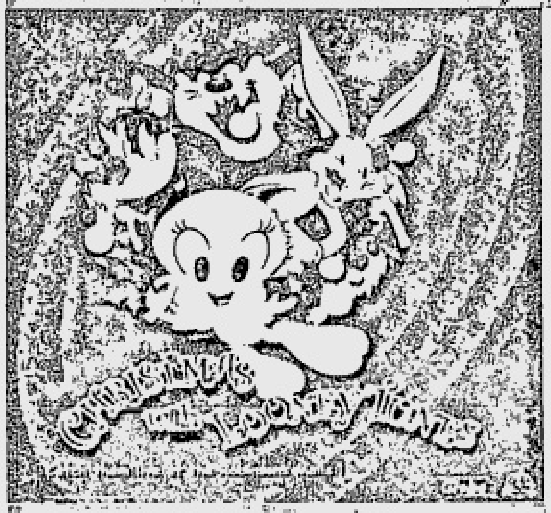

What's up with us, doc? The looniest bunch is out to spread some Christmas cheer!

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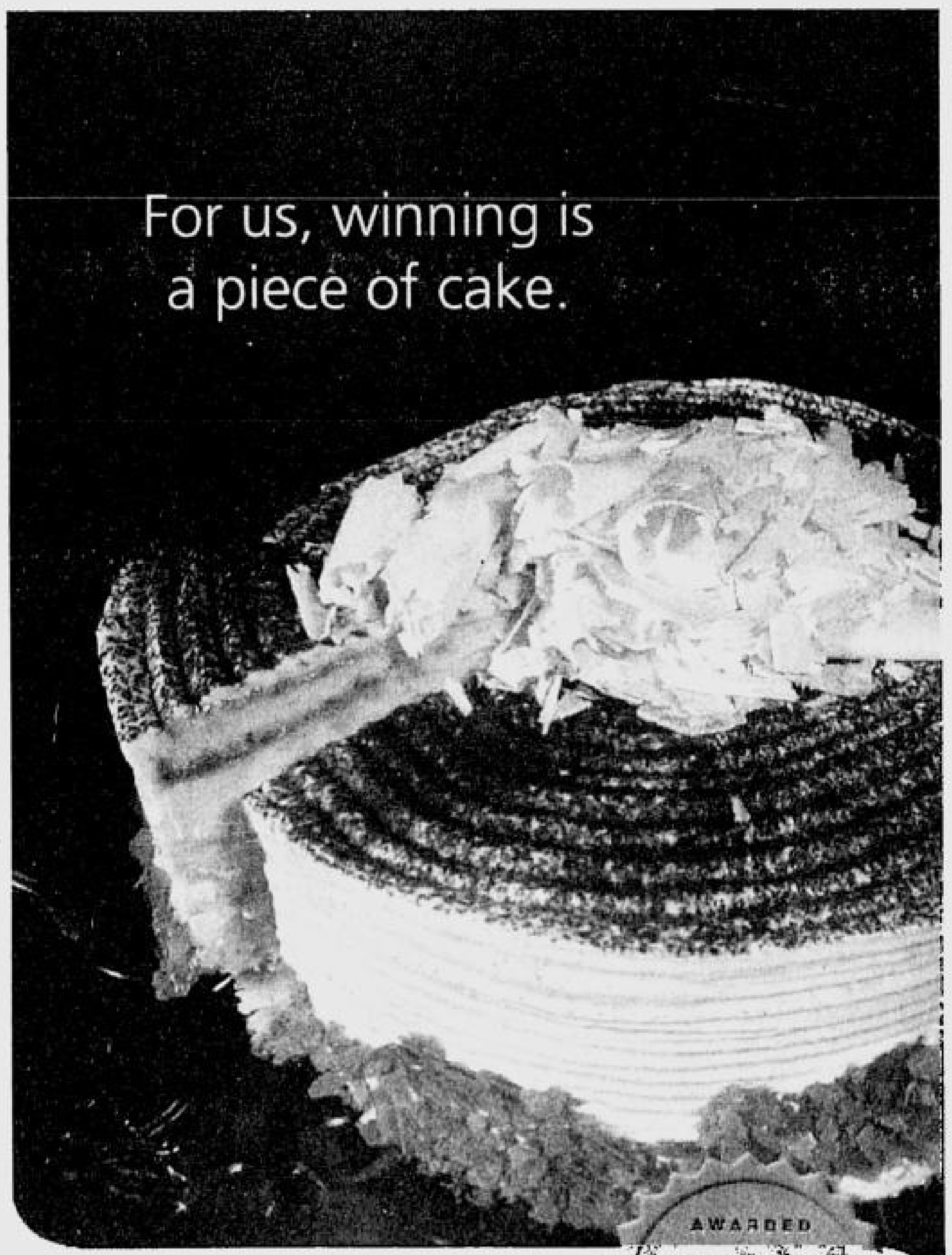

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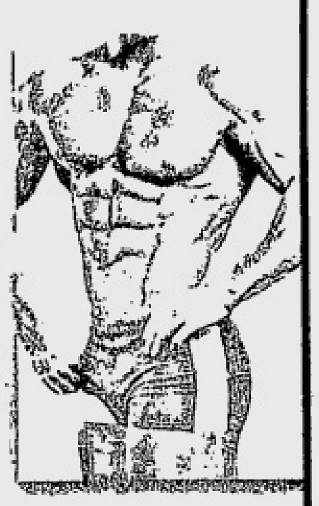

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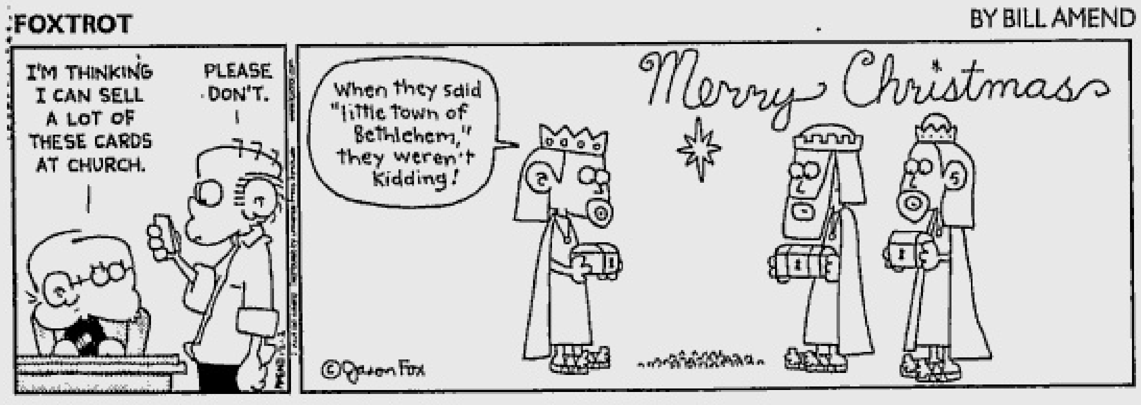
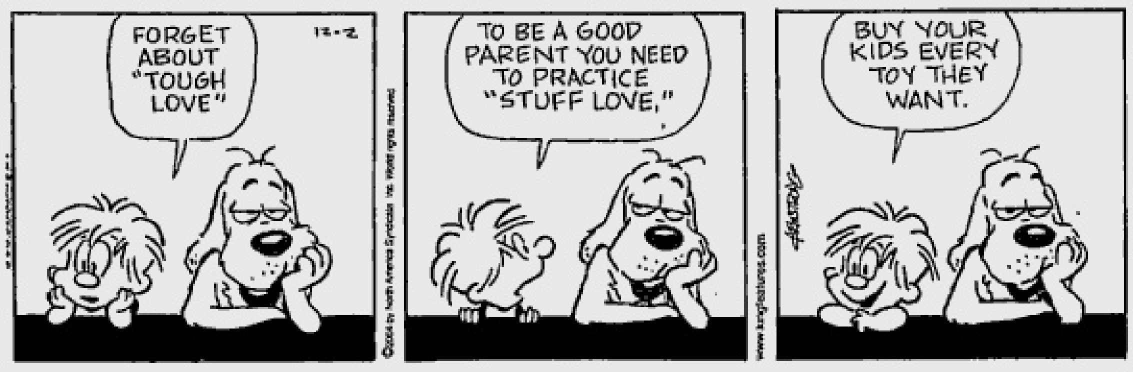
FOXTROT

BY BILL AMEND


I'M THINKING I CAN SELL A LOT OF THESE CARDS AT CHURCH.
PLEASE DON'T.
When they said "little town of Bethlehem," they weren't kidding!
Merry Christmas
©Jason Fox

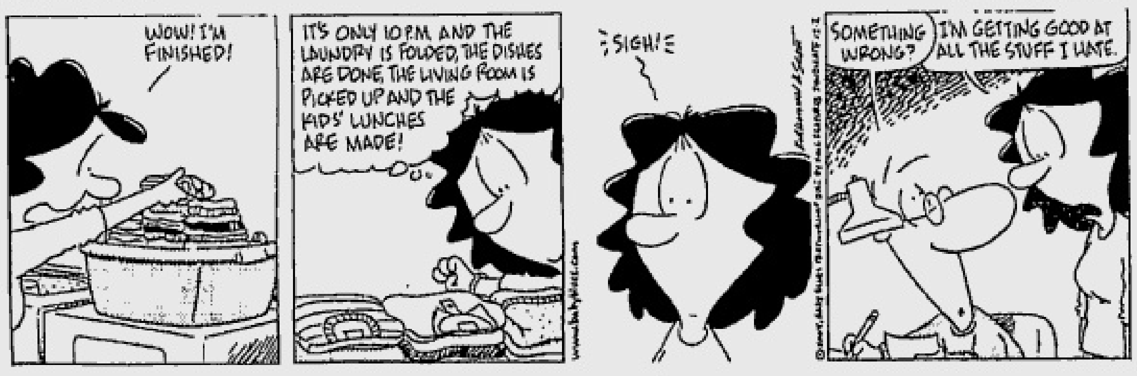
MARVIN

BY TOM ARMSTRONG


FORGET ABOUT "TOUGH LOVE"
12-2
TO BE A GOOD PARENT YOU NEED TO PRACTICE "STUFF LOVE."
BUY YOUR KIDS EVERY TOY THEY WANT.

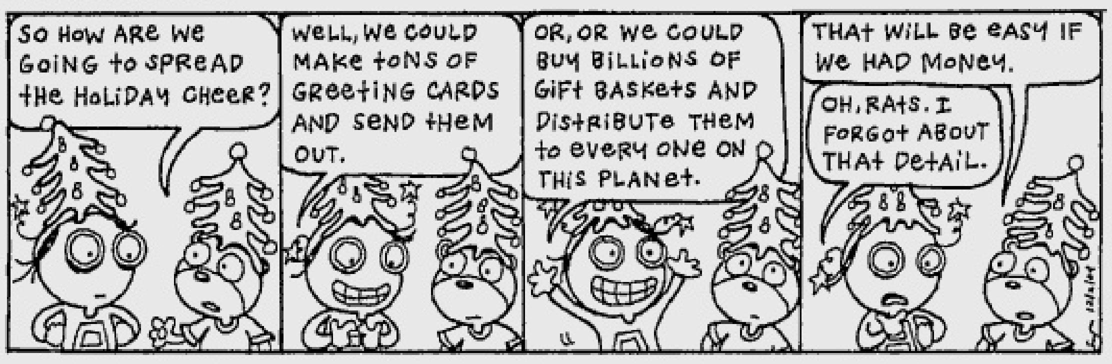
BABY BLUES

BY JERRY SCOTT


WOW! I'M FINISHED!
IT'S ONLY 10 P.M. AND THE LAUNDRY IS FOLDED, THE DISHES ARE DONE, THE LIVING ROOM IS PICKED UP AND THE KIDS' LUNCHES ARE MADE!
SIGH!
SOMETHING WRONG?
I'M GETTING GOOD AT ALL THE STUFF I HATE.

ATOMO AND WEBOY

BY LYRA GARCELLANO


So how are we going to spread the holiday cheer?
Well, we could make tons of greeting cards and send them out.
Or, or we could buy billions of gift baskets and distribute them to every one on this planet.
That will be easy if we had money.
Oh, rats. I forgot about that detail.

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

YOU BORN TODAY: You're extremely dynamic! You deal with life in a very physical way. You shine when you are in action. You have a strong character and set of ethics, and you respect these qualities in others. You won't back down from a fight. Work hard in the year ahead for major changes in 2006-07.
Birthdate of: Lucy Liu, actress; Britney Spears, singer; Monica Seles, tennis player.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): Just maintain a holding pattern today. Seek out fun-loving, pleasurable pursuits. Catch a movie, watch a game, attend a party and enjoy playful activities with children.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): Discussions with a parent might be quite important today. This is a good day to putter around home and fuss with domestic activities. (Why not bake some cookies?)

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): This is a busy day! Attend to errands, shopping, negotiations and visits with siblings. You can get a lot done. Just take things one at a time.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): You might want to buy something rather flamboyant today. You feel dramatic and bold. (Today's Leo Moon makes you want to look like a movie star.)

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): Today's Moon is in your sign! This means you have a little bit more good luck than everybody else. Go after anything that you want a "yes" answer to; you just might get it!

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): Try to find a little time for yourself today. Even half an hour of solitude will set you right. You need time to collect your thoughts and soothe your inner being.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): Discussions with friends will be pleasant today. In particular, a conversation with a female friend will be very rewarding. You need a good chinwag.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): People notice you today. Look your best. Today's Leo Moon is at the top of your chart. You might have an important discussion with your boss.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): Try to do something a bit different and out of the ordinary today. Break with routine. Drive to or from work a different route. Visit different stores. Buy an unusual magazine. You need to shake it up a little.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): Attend to details connected with insurance matters, shared debt, taxes and credit. These are boring red-tape matters, but they need your attention now. You can plow through this quickly!

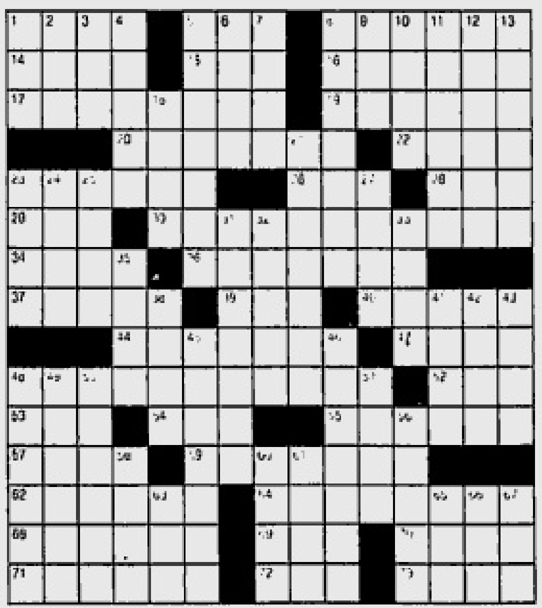
AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): Discussions with others are significant today. The Moon is opposite your sign. This gives you an opportunity to see where others are coming from. It makes you tolerant and cooperative.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): You'll enjoy puttering around doing little things that help you feel better organized. Throw away at least five things you don't need.

DAILY CROSSWORD

ACROSS
1 Wally's bro
5 Training room
8 Continue
14 VCR alternative
15 Abu Dhabi, Dubai et al.
16 Constituent of natural gas
17 Start of a quip
19 Dodger Reese
20 Family ties
22 Touches gently
23 Geological layers
26 Zilch
28 "Sands of __-Jima"
29 Lion's name
30 Part 2 of quip
34 Movie pooch
36 Radar of "M*A*S*H"
37 The ones here
39 AMA members
40 Not suitable
44 Derricks on docks
47 Royal role for Liz
48 Part 3 of quip
52 Play about Capote
53 First serial port
54 Right-angled joint
55 Golfer's frustrating miss
57 Cosby/Culp TV series
59 Blight on the landscape
62 Missourian's demand
64 End of quip
68 "Under the __ Sun"
69 Pro's foe
70 Canal of song
71 Simple weapons
72 Refuse to share
73 Mailed

DOWN
1 "Takin' Care of Business" grp.
2 German article
3 Park in NYC?
4 Spirits of a screwdriver
5 Llama relative
6 Swerves off course
7 Webwork
8 Stimulant drug
9 Shoshone
10 Dog of song
11 "__ Five-O"
12 Boxer's combo
13 "Schindler's List" star
18 Beatles' meter maid
21 Engraved
23 Thin strip of wood
24 Pianist John
25 Memory type
27 Lollapalooza
31 Neat
32 Courage
33 Harmony, briefly
35 Part of USTA
38 Feminizing suffix
41 Palo __, CA
42 Land of Lima
43 Racetrack figure
45 Brennan and Heckart
46 Flying alone
48 Belt locations
49 Quiet!
50 Make visible
51 Old snow
56 Some lapdogs
58 Org. founded in 1858
60 Imprint clearly
61 Get lost!
63 Besmirch
65 Anger
66 Diarist Anais
67 Understand



By Bruce Venzke & Stella Daily
Madison, WI
12/2/04

Wednesday's Puzzle Solved

S	L	A	M	■	G	A	L	A	■	C	O	A	T	S
N	O	D	E	■	R	I	A	L	■	I	S	S	E	I
A	G	I	N	■	A	N	T	I	■	A	L	T	A	R
F	O	O	T	I	N	T	H	E	D	O	O	R	■	■
U	N	S	A	I	D	■	E	N	V	■	■	O	S	S
■	■	■	L	I	S	T	■	■	D	I	A	N	N	E
S	A	S	■	■	O	O	P	S	■	S	P	A	I	N
H	E	A	D	I	N	T	H	E	C	L	O	U	D	S
I	N	L	E	T	■	E	U	R	O	■	■	T	E	E
R	E	E	F	E	R	■	■	■	E	L	U	L	■	■
E	S	S	■	■	I	R	S	■	O	P	E	R	A	S
■	■	T	O	N	G	U	E	I	N	C	H	E	E	K
O	S	A	G	E	■	M	O	D	E	■	R	A	G	E
B	E	L	L	E	■	B	U	L	L	■	E	D	I	E
I	N	K	E	D	■	A	L	E	S	■	R	E	S	T

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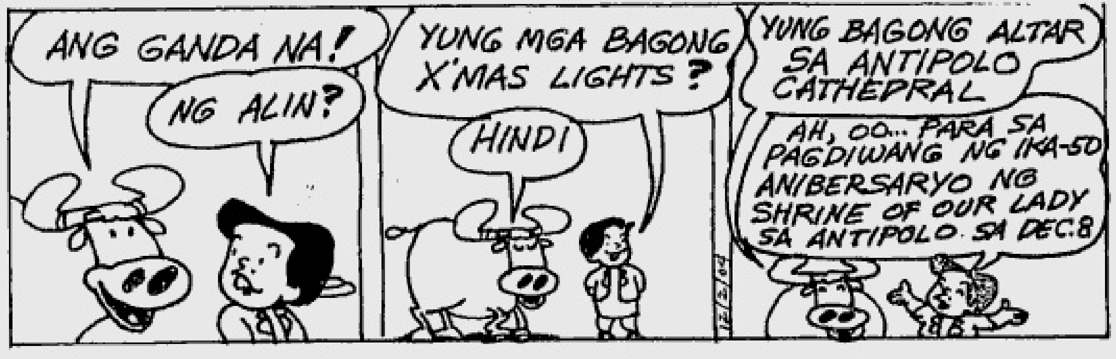
12/2/04

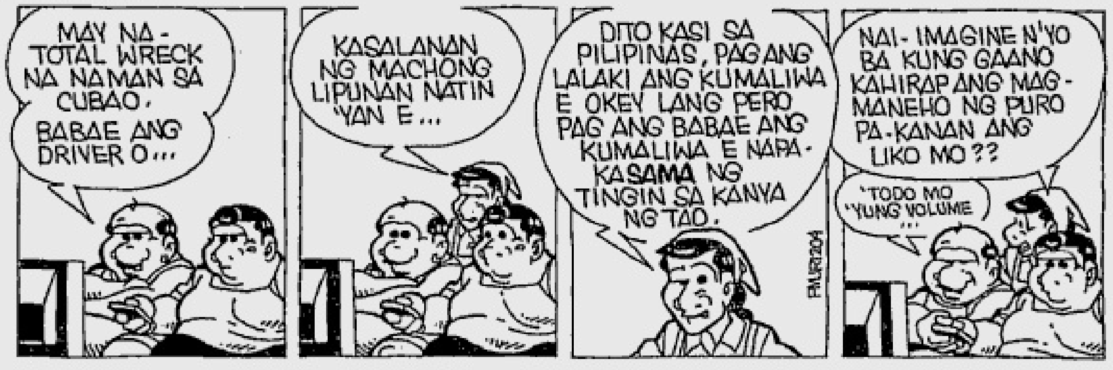
A. LIPIN

BY JESS ABRERA


ANG GANDA NA!
NG ALIN?
YUNG MGA BAGONG X'MAS LIGHTS?
HINDI
YUNG BAGONG ALTAR SA ANTIPOLO CATHEDRAL
AH, OO... PARA SA PAGDIWANG NG IKA-50 ANIBERSARYO NG SHRINE OF OUR LADY SA ANTIPOLO SA DEC.8

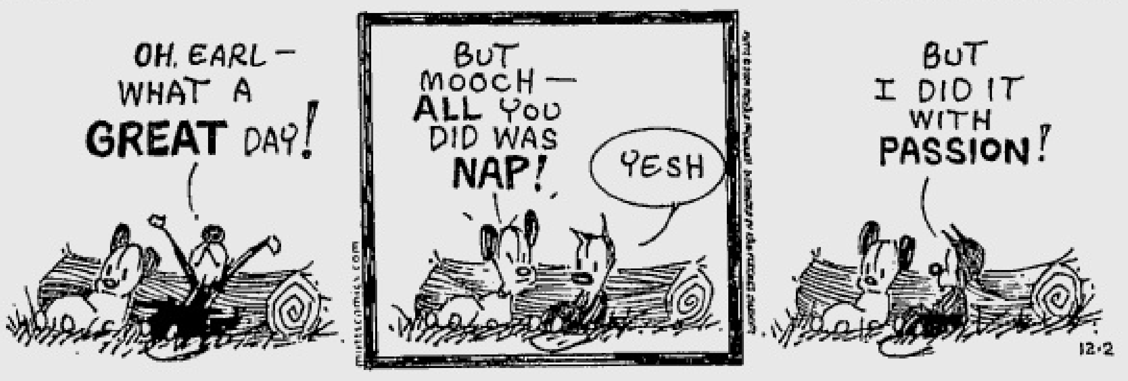
PUGAD BABOY

BY P.M. JUNIOR


MAY NA-TOTAL WRECK NA NAMAN SA CUBAO.
BABAE ANG DRIVER O...
KASALANAN NG MACHONG LIPUNAN NATIN 'YAN E...
DITO KASI SA PILIPINAS, PAG ANG LALAKI ANG KUMALIWA E OKEY LANG PERO PAG ANG BABAE ANG KUMALIWA E NAPA-KASAMA NG TINGIN SA KANYA NG TAO.
NAI-IMAGINE N'YO BA KUNG GAANO KAHIRAP ANG MAG-MANEHO NG PURO PA-KANAN ANG LIKO MO??
'TODO MO 'YUNG VOLUME...

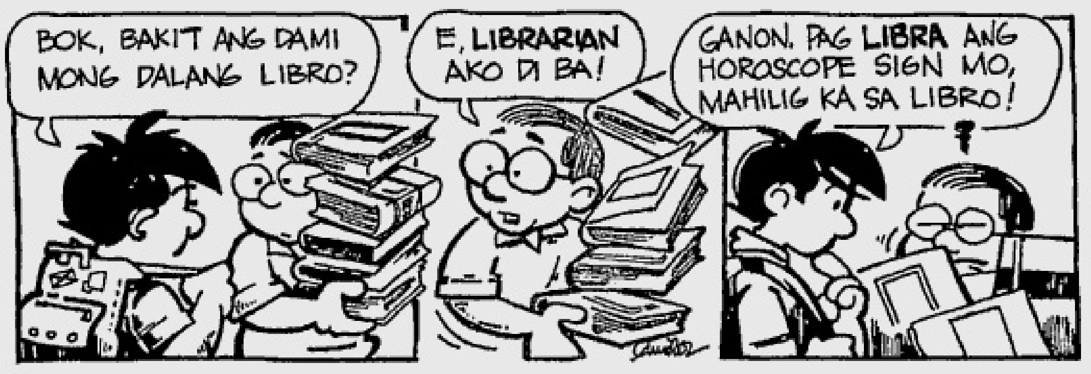
MUTTS

BY PATRICK McDONNELL


OH, EARL — WHAT A GREAT DAY!
BUT MOOCH — ALL YOU DID WAS NAP!
YESH
BUT I DID IT WITH PASSION!
12-2

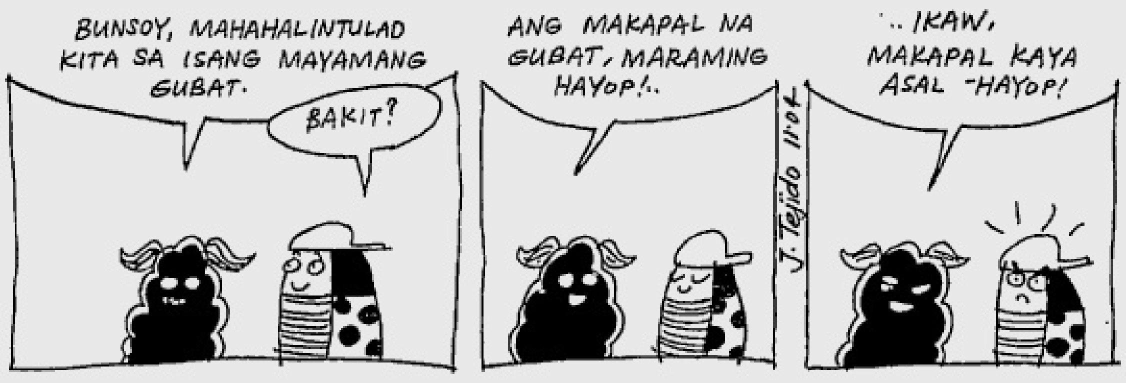
GENG'S GAMES

BY AMIEL RUFO


BOK, BAKIT ANG DAMI MONG DALANG LIBRO?
E, LIBRARIAN AKO DI BA!
GANON. PAG LIBRA ANG HOROSCOPE SIGN MO, MAHILIG KA SA LIBRO!

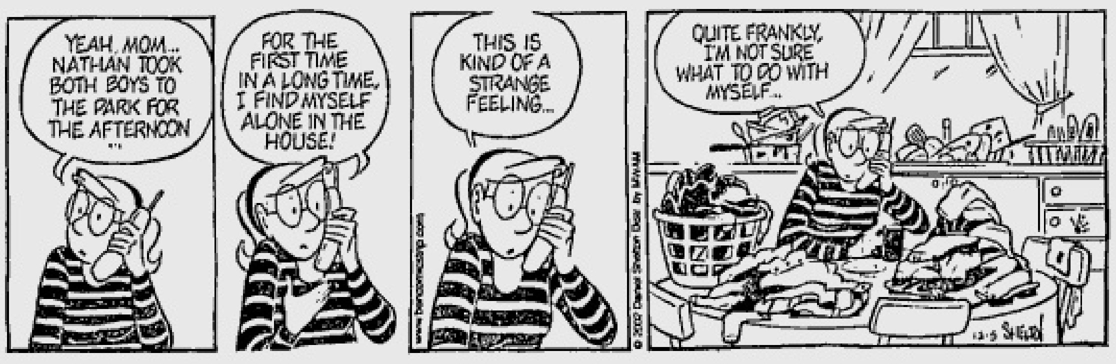
MIKROKOSMOS

BY JOMIKE TEJIDO


BUNSOY, MAHAHALINTULAD KITA SA ISANG MAYAMANG GUBAT.
BAKIT?
ANG MAKAPAL NA GUBAT, MARAMING HAYOP!..
J. Tejido 11'04
..IKAW, MAKAPAL KAYA ASAL-HAYOP!

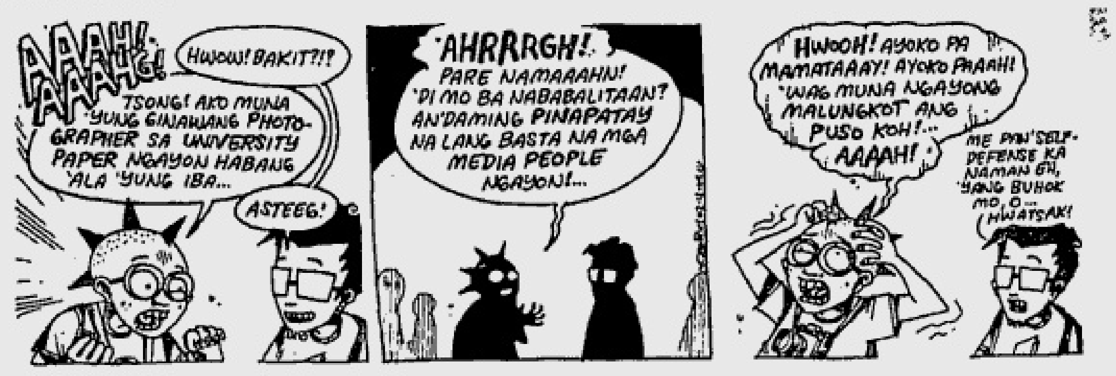
BEN

BY DANIEL SHELTON


YEAH, MOM... NATHAN TOOK BOTH BOYS TO THE PARK FOR THE AFTERNOON...
FOR THE FIRST TIME IN A LONG TIME, I FIND MYSELF ALONE IN THE HOUSE!
THIS IS KIND OF A STRANGE FEELING...
QUITE FRANKLY, I'M NOT SURE WHAT TO DO WITH MYSELF...

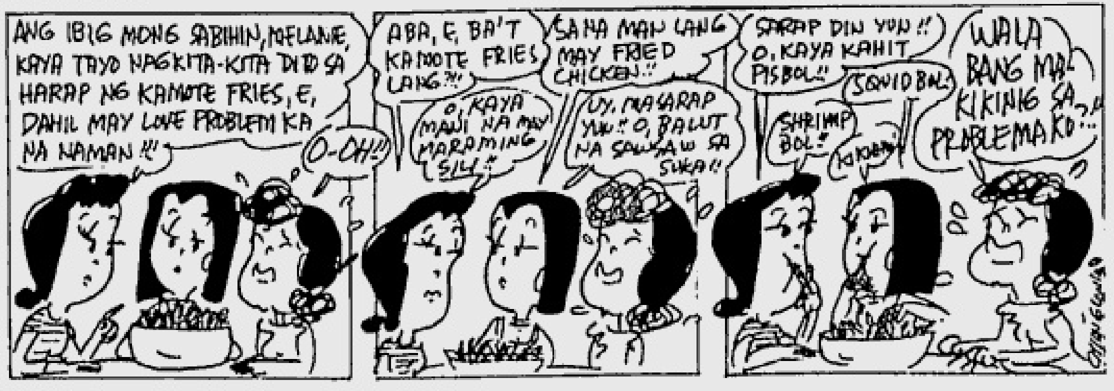
KIKO MACHINE

BY MANIX ABRERA


AAAH! AAAHG!
HWOW! BAKIT?!?
TSONG! AKO MUNA 'YUNG GINAWANG PHOTOGRAPHER SA UNIVERSITY PAPER NGAYON HABANG 'ALA 'YUNG IBA...
ASTEEG!
AHRRRGH! PARE NAMAAAHN! 'DI MO BA NABABALITAAN? AN'DAMING PINAPATAY NA LANG BASTA NA MGA MEDIA PEOPLE NGAYON!...
HWOOH! AYOKO PA MAMATAAAY! AYOKO PAAAH! 'WAG MUNA NGAYONG MALUNGKOT ANG PUSO KOH!... AAAAH!
ME PAN'SELF-DEFENSE KA NAMAN EH, 'YANG BUHOK MO, O...
HWATSAK!

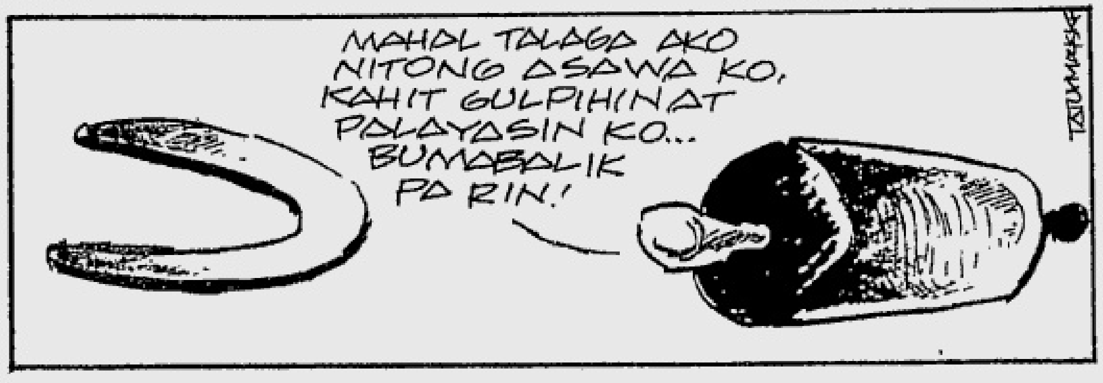
LOVEKNOTS

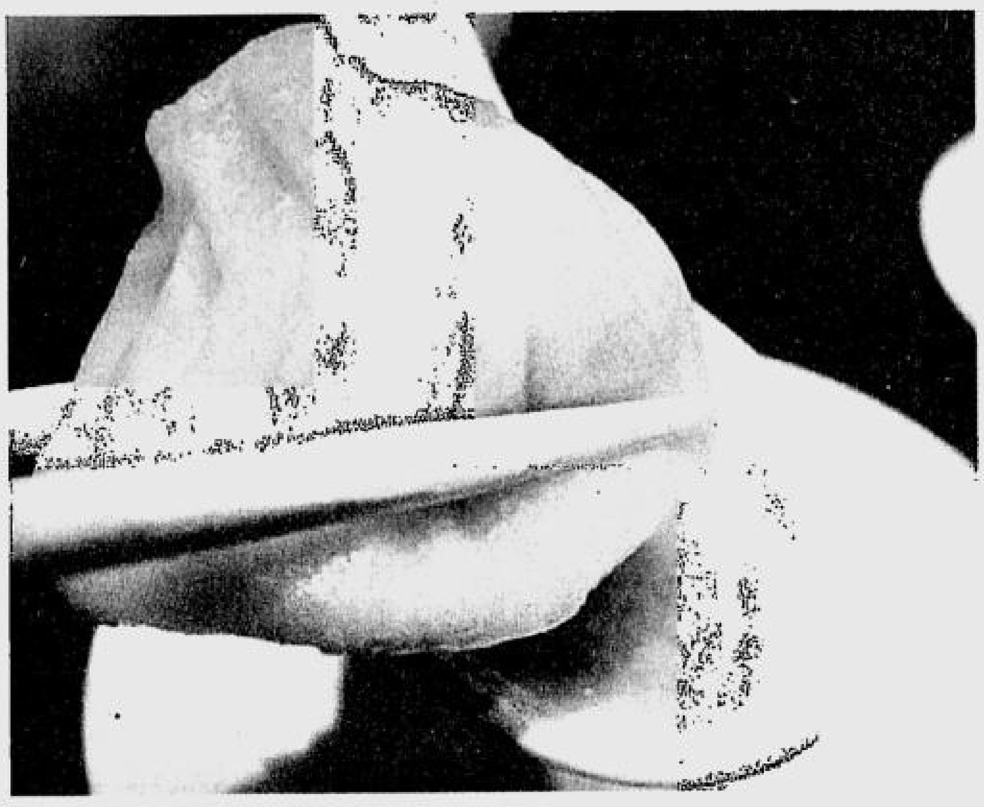
BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


ANG IBIG MONG SABIHIN, MELANIE, KAYA TAYO NAGKITA-KITA DITO SA HARAP NG KAMOTE FRIES, E, DAHIL MAY LOVE PROBLEM KA NA NAMAN!!!
O-OH!!
ABA, E, BA'T KAMOTE FRIES LANG?!!
O, KAYA MANI NA MAY MARAMING SILI!!
SANA MAN LANG MAY FRIED CHICKEN!!
UY, MASARAP YUN!! O, BALUT NA SAWSAW SA SUKA!!
SARAP DIN YUN!! O, KAYA KAHIT PISBOL!!
SQUID BOL!
SHRIMP BOL!
WALA BANG MAKIKINIG SA PROBLEMA KO...?!

TULDOK

BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING


MAHAL TALAGA AKO NITONG ASAWA KO. KAHIT GULPIHIN AT PALAYASIN KO... BUMABALIK PA RIN!
TATUM



STEAMED souped crab dumpling from Nanxiang Steamed Bun restaurant

Rice is one of the most valued things in Japan that, in the past, wealth was measured according to how much rice a person had

The other Japanese art

From page E1

expensive there. On the average, a meal costs Y1000 (P500). In the end, it is money spent wisely.

The food scene in Japan is quite global so there's no reason to limit yourself to Japanese fare.

Indian

On a recent trip to Japan, we sampled Kare Raisu or curry rice at the Madras Curry Rice Shop in Osaka. Adapted from the Indian curry a century ago, Kare Raisu is great for warming up during cold seasons. Inexpensive, the servings of Kare Raisu are huge and hard to finish. But you have to.

Rice is one of the most valued things in Japan. *Gohan*, their word for it, means "honorable food." For a long time in Japanese history, rice was used as currency and wealth was measured according to how much rice a person had. To leave bits of it on your plate is offensive.

CURRY SHOP
MADRAS
SINCE · 1988

CURRY rice shop in Osaka

Chinese

Nanxiang Steamed Bun Restaurant in China has franchised out and set up shop in the ultra-hip and mega-expensive district of Roppongi Hills in Tokyo. The Nanxiang Steamed Bun Restaurant is famous for its *xiao lung pao* or steamed "souped" dumplings with either pork or crab filling.

On the outside, the dumplings look just like any other you would pick up in any Chinese fastfood joint. Oh, but inside, it's a whole new experience! The first thing to do is suck the soup from inside the dumpling, like you do with a *balut*. If you bite into the dumpling it will burst and you'll be in a mess.

The soup is very tasty but fatty so this is not for people with high cholesterol levels. Don't drink all the soup; save some for when you bite into your dumpling. The magical soup is what makes all the difference. That's why, at Nanxiang's busiest, it is said that one could stand in line for more than an hour! Luckily, it only took us 30 minutes. But as if you're not anxious enough, the restaurant has glass for walls: You can see all the cooks rolling their pins, sticking the meat and steaming their buns as you wait.

Something fishy

I had my first taste of Maguro Donburi—raw tuna rice topping—at the Tsukiji Fish Market, which was the only tourist spot in our Tokyo Guide Book that we ventured to. Tsukiji is where all the fish of the city's restaurants come from. But it's more like a warehouse than a wet market. To get a taste of the freshest fish, go there early at 6 a.m. In between the warehouses where the fishy actions take place, there are alleys lined with shops and small restaurants.

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決めよう!

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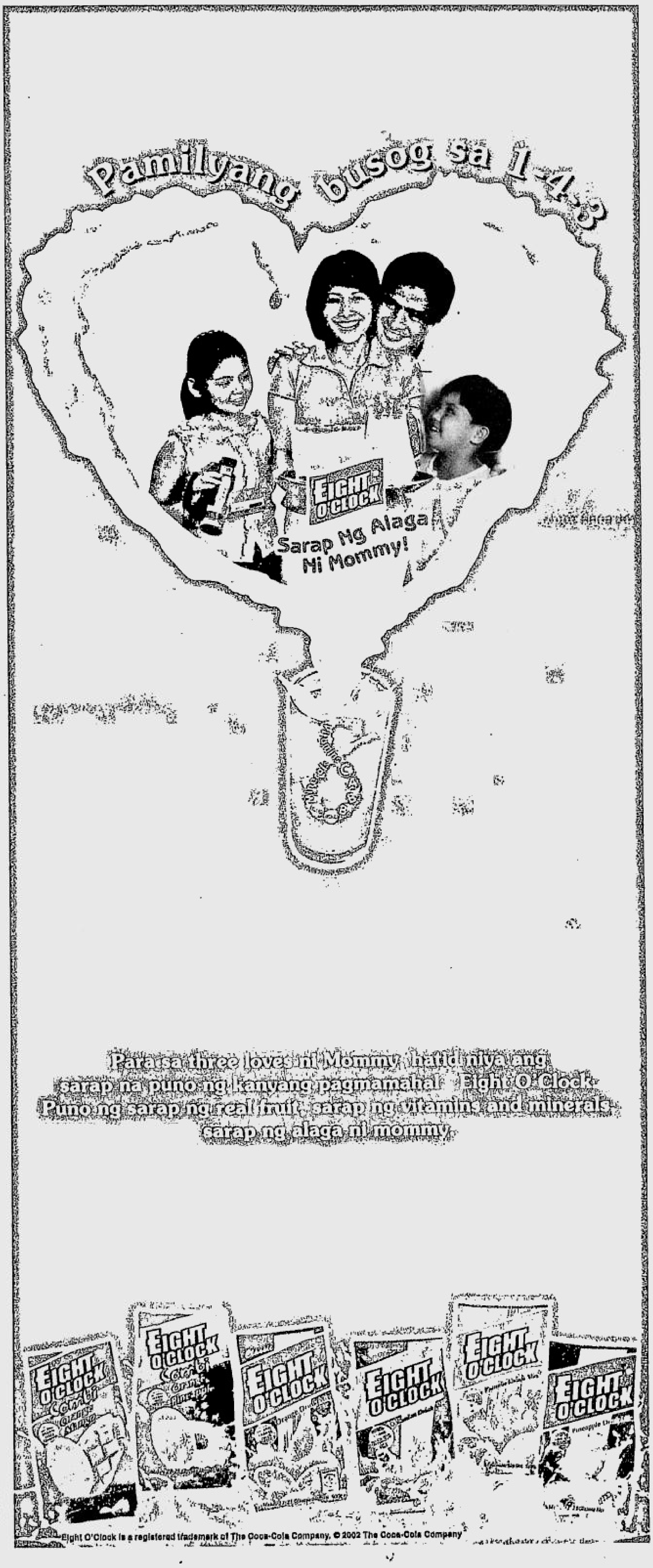
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Para sa three loves ni Mommy, hatid niya ang sarap na puno ng kanyang pagmamahal. Eight O'Clock. Puno ng sarap ng real fruit, sarap ng vitamins and minerals, sarap ng alaga ni mommy.
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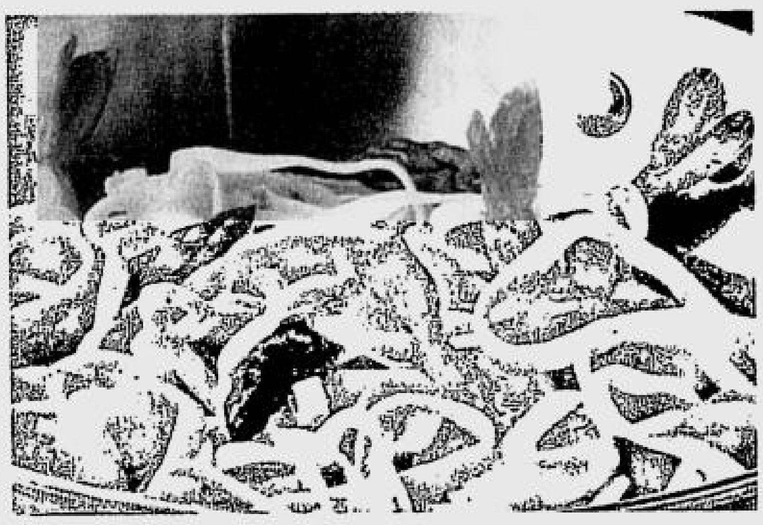
Ñ SPANISH restaurant is now at Rockwell Center, Makati. Its *completas comidas* and *platos combinados* include soup and main course. Happy hour is held Monday-Thursday, 6-9 p.m., with 50-percent off on beer; Friday-Saturday, with 50-percent discount on cocktails. Call 8982472.



ITALIANNI'S Restaurant opens its new branch in One Luna Lifestyle Center in Eastwood Avenue, Libis, QC. The resto offers Spinach and Artichoke Formaggio, Stuffed Mushroom, Sicilian Chicken Salad, Penne Arrabiato, Angel Hair Pomodoro, Shrimp Fra Diablo, Roasted Chicken Italianni's, Classic New York Style Cheesecake and Tartuffo. Other Italianni's branches are located at Greenbelt 2, Glorietta 4, Alabang Town Center, SM City Bicutan and Greenhills, San Juan.

A taste of Vietnam

DINING OUT

DUSIT Hotel Nikko's Thien Duong Vietnamese restaurant presents the Hue Food Festival until Dec. 31. Savor Hue's Braised Beef Frank, Roasted Yogurt Marinated Chicken, Hue Noodle Soup with Pork and Beef, Stir-Fried Chicken with Green Pepper and Baby Corn, Sauteed Dry Shrimp with Bamboo Shoot. On Dec. 24, 25, 31 and Jan. 1, 2005, the resto features a Vietnamese Yuletide set menu. Call 8673333.

CONGO Grille offers Sisig, Crispy Pata, Ginataang Kohol, Pata-tim, Congo Mango, grilled dishes such as *pusit*, tuna belly and blue marlin. Congo Grille is located at SM Fairview; Scout Albano, QC; El Pueblo, Ortigas Center; Pasay Road, Makati; and Westgate Center, Filinvest Alabang.

SHANGHAI Bistro has an ongoing promo for dine-in customers. For every order of food and drinks worth P1,000, customers are entitled to a dish of Crispy Pigeon for only P10 instead of the regular price of P375. The offer is good for dinner, Monday-Friday, and lunch and dinner, Monday-Saturday at the resto's Eastwood City Walk 2. Call 8928870/ 8928872 (Makati) and 6871861 (QC).

SULO Hotel offers a special holiday treat for the whole month of December. Sulo's Cake of the Month is the Christmas Fruit Cake, made from imported mixed fruits, lemon filled with raisins and crunchy cashew nuts, soaked in rum topped with red cherries, offered at P225 until Dec. 31. Try the hotel's Dish of the Month fresh and juicy "Gindara," a grilled cod fish with Teriyaki sauce, served with salad sidings and plain rice. Available at the hotel's Sushi Bar and Teppanyaki Restaurant. Call 9245051 to 71.

HEN Lin presents 8 Treasures Value Meals: Pork Barbecue, Lumpia Shanghai, Lechon Macau, Garlic Chicken and Porkchop. These are all served with Pancit Canton and drinks. For dessert, Black Gulaman and Almond Jelly with Lychees are offered. Hen Lin is located at Shell Service Plaza (South and North), Caltex Sta. Rosa, Shell Balintawak and Caltex station North Bound Tollway and South Luzon Expressway.

THE FRENCH Baker features fruitcakes, holiday breads, scones, carrot and brownie bars, mini Danish pastries, strussels, cream puffs, St. Dalfour's Organic Green Tea and Tchibo Decaf Coffee.

It's Okay To Be Chubby At Age 5. Not At Age 12.

It's easy for any parent not to worry about excess fat problem on a chubby, happy kid. But time flies, suddenly that same fat kid is a young teenager heading into its formative years - and now the problem is serious. Being overweight can inhibit social behavior, learning abilities, mental well-being and the development of brain power. Once a child starts putting on weight, it's difficult to stop. Adults have difficulty with self-control when it comes to over-eating, but kids have none! Many parents find they can't handle the problem without professional help.

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Editor **Louie C. Camino**
Assistant Editor **Emmie G. Velarde**

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Women without men in 'Spirit of the Glass'

"SOMEBODY still loves me," says Rica Peralejo

"IF YOU'RE career-oriented, you can go it alone," says Alessandra de Rossi

"THERE are nice men out there," says Ciara Sotto

By Jocelyn Valle
Contributor

THE FEMALE stars of the horror flick, "Spirit of the Glass," are all single and unattached.

Rica Peralejo recently broke up with longtime boyfriend Bernard Palanca. Alessandra de Rossi, who used to date Oyo Boy Sotto, has been boyfriend-less for the last 11 months. Ciara Sotto has not found a new flame since splitting up last year with John Lloyd Cruz.

"But somebody still loves me," Rica declared with a mischievous grin. "No, we've not reconciled. No strings attached *kami*, like we don't check on each other's whereabouts."

Freedom to go out

Although she and Bernard were serious with each other, Rica pointed out that they didn't seriously talk about settling down. "I think you have to live a full single life first before you get married, and I haven't lived half of my life yet," added the former mainstay of the old kiddie program "Ang TV." "I've been working for so long and I want to take a break someday to experience a normal life again. I also want to go to college. In fact, I plan to enroll next year."

What if the time comes when she's ready to get back to Bernard but he has already found somebody else?

"I have to live with that possibility," she sighed and nodded. Apparently, she's still not ready to see her ex with another woman.

Ciara said she was relishing the freedom to go out on dates with different guys.

"There are nice men out there," Ciara grinned, adding that she and her ex are OK. "I haven't talked to him for a week, though."

The dusky singer-actress related that she and John Lloyd went steady for two and a half years before going on separate ways last year. "I'm not just the girl for him," she reasoned.

Like Cindy

Ciara said she empathized with Cindy Kurleto, who recently divulged her sacrifices to protect the love team of her now ex-boyfriend Jericho Rosales with Kristine Hermosa.

"When I was still with John Lloyd and there were stories against me, Cindy would tell me that she knew the feeling," Ciara said. "I understand her, too."

John Lloyd's on-screen love team with newcomer Bea Alonzo was born in the soap opera "Kay Tagal Kang Hinintay," which aired while he was still in a relationship with Ciara. John Lloyd and Ciara were reportedly told to keep their romance hush-hush so as not to jeopardize the popular Lloyd-Bea love team.

When asked if she could endure what Ciara had gone through in the name of love, Alessandra vehemently said no. "If you're career-oriented, you can go it alone," she balked, speaking in Filipino.

In "Spirit of the Glass," directed by Jose Javier Reyes for Canary Films, the three young stars are best friends who, along with their love interests, are forced to divert their Lenten plans from fun Boracay to a strange old house in another province. Out of boredom, the group plays the ouija board and in the process unwittingly stirs up the souls in the place.

Dingdong Dantes, Paolo Contis, Drew Arellano, Jay Aquitania, Jake Cuenca and Cris Daluz also star in this Metro Manila Film Festival entry.

In real life, Rica, Alessandra and Ciara also get along well. During the press lunch for the movie, the three single gals teased one another while threatening to spill the beans on their love lives. They joked that the ones they were constantly calling on their mobile phones were their.

WOMEN/2

WITH MEN. Rica and Ciara with their "Spirit of the Glass" co-stars (clockwise from front center) Marvin Agustin, Dingdong Dantes, Paolo Contis and Drew Arellano

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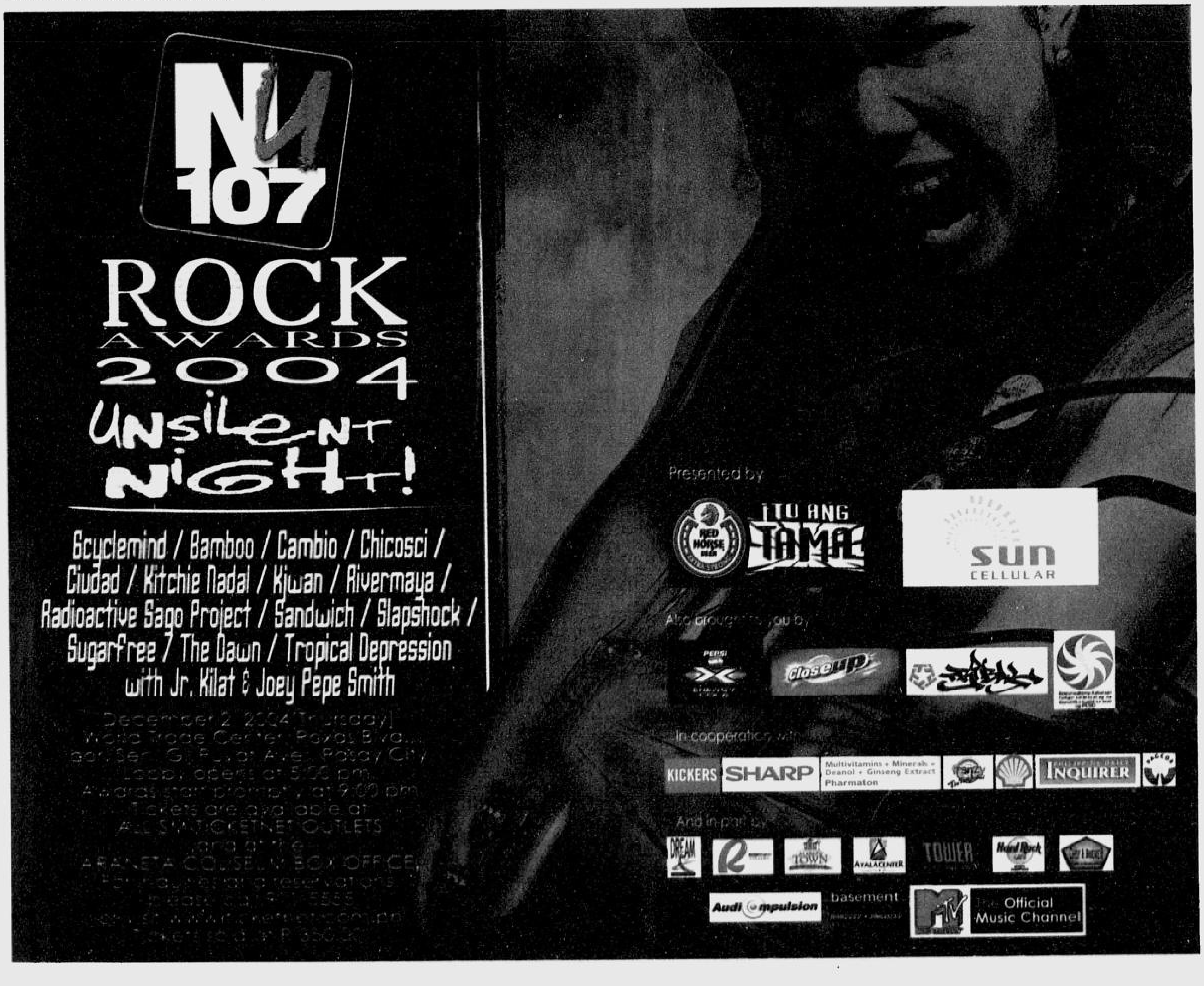

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RENÉE ZELLWEGER HUGH GRANT COLIN FIRTH

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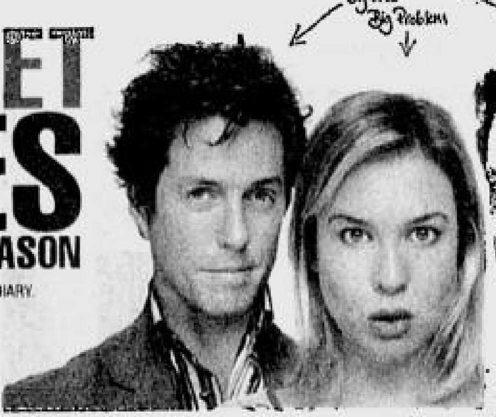
SAME BRIDGET. BRAND NEW DIARY.



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SM Tutuban Cinema 1
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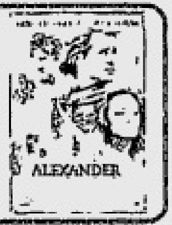
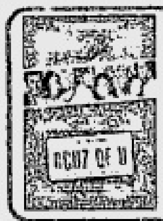
SM Sta. Mesa Cinema 3
SM Southmall Cinema 8
SM Fairview Cinema 4
SM Manila Cinema 4
SM North Edsa Cinema 8
SM Megamall Cinema 3



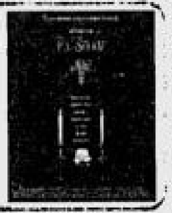


BCUZ OF U Subject to MTRCB RATING
SM North Edsa Cinema 3
SM Megamall Cinema 11
SM Sta. Mesa Cinema 9
SM Southmall Cinema 10
SM Fairview Cinema 3
SM Manila Cinema 12
SM Tutuban Cinema 4

MTRCB RATING:PG 13 BRIDGET JONES 2
SM Southmall Cinema 4
SM Sta. Mesa Cinema 4
SM Manila Cinema 6
SM Fairview Cinema 7
SM Megamall Cinema 2
SM North Edsa Cinema 5

NATIONAL TREASURE MTRCB RATING. G
SM Manila Cinema 1
SM North Edsa Cinema 7
SM Megamall Cinema 4
SM City Sta. Mesa Cinema 5
SM Southmall Cinema 2
SM Sucat Cinema 4
SM Fairview Cinema 9

SUBJECT TO MTRCB RATING PA-SIYAM
SM Bicutan Cinema 2
SM Tutuban Cinema 3
SM Sucat Cinema 2
SM Southmall Cinema 7
SM Fairview Cinema 6
SM Megamall Cinema 9
SM Sta. Mesa Cinema 1
SM Manila Cinema 9
SM North Edsa Cinema 1



THE POLAR EXPRESS MTRCB Rating: G
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SM North Edsa Cinema 2
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SM Southmall Cinema 1
SM Fairview Cinema 8
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SM Sucat Cinema 1
SM Bicutan Cinema 3
SM Fairview Cinema 5
SM Tutuban Cinema 2
SM Megamall Cinema 7
SM Sta. Mesa Cinema 8
SM Manila Cinema 5
SM North Edsa Cinema 6

AFTER THE SUNSET MTRCB RATING:R13
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SM Megamall Cinema 1
SM Fairview Cinema 10
SM Sta. Mesa Cinema 6

HELLWOLF SUBJECT TO MTRCB RATING,
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SM Megamall Cinema 12

THE INCREDIBLES MTRCB RATING. G
SM Manila Cinema 11
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SM Megamall Cinema 6
SM Southmall Cinema 6
SM Fairview Cinema 2

SANTA SANTITA MTRCB RATING: PG13
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SM Fairview Cinema 1
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SM North Edsa Cinema 4

SAW MTRCB RATING: R 13
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San Miguel Master Chorale in Regine and Martin shows

THE SAN Miguel Master Chorale again graces the pop concert stage this December—as guest performer in the solo concerts of Regine Velasquez and Martin Nievera.

The SMMC and Regine will join forces in grand numbers leading to the finale of "Reigning... Still" at the Araneta Coliseum on Dec. 3 and 4. The concert is directed by Velasquez herself and also features Ariel Rivera, Sarah Geronimo, Rachel Ann Go, Kyla, Francis M, Andrew E and Hotlegs, with Raul Mitra as musical director.

The SMMC's stint with Nievera, "All You Need is Love (A Brass Kicking Christmas Concert)," follows on Dec. 10 at the PICC Plenary Hall featuring the big-band sound of a 20-piece brass ensemble under the musical direction of Louie Ocampo.

Guest performer in Martin's show is Fil-American Camile Velasco of "American Idol" fame.

The SMMC will also be performing at The San Miguel Christmas Music Festival, a series of Yuletide-themed concerts at The Podium (Dec. 3 to 4), Shangri-La Plaza (Dec. 16) and Shoemart Makati (Dec. 17). Some of these performances will be staged together with The San Miguel Philharmonic Orchestra.

On Dec. 15, the SMMC will perform for the first time at the D.L. Umali Hall in UP Los Baños, Laguna. The special concert, dubbed "Isang Pamaskong Handog," will be marked by Philippine and world premieres of several Christmas pieces.

In addition to its Christmas performances, the SMMC will be heard live on the air at "The RX Concert Series" on Monster Radio Rx 93.1 FM on Dec. 6 and 13 at 6 p.m.

The SMMC, the country's first and only professional choir, is conducted by Eudenice Palaruan. The chorale recently released "Great Original Pilipino Music by Ryan Cayabyab," its latest recording with the SMPO.

Next year, the SMMC will represent the Philippines in the 7th World Symposium on Choral Music in Kyoto, Japan.

For more information on this month's SMPO and SMMC performances, visit www.smfpa.com. To get automatic updates, join the mailing list in the SMFPA website.

Music school students in recital concert

THE PHILIPPINE Music Training School (PMTS) will present promising students in a recital concert called "Salamat Musika" on Saturday, Dec. 4, at 7 p.m. at the Rembrandt Hotel's Saskia on Tomas Morato Extension in Quezon City.

The recital students are Mae Anne Christine D. Melotocon, Angeline Shaira Carandang, Danica Mia Garcia, Denise Richelle Guela, Rainier Raymundo, Alodie S. Quizon, Audris S. Quizon, Ruby D. Manaka, Angelique S. Quizon, Jebelle Mei J. Tores, Vanessa Jae P. Villespin and Zenaida B. Dollente.

The Philippine Music Training School has invited noted composers like Mon del Rosario, Snaffu Rigor and Nonoy Tan to compose the panel of judges.

The most outstanding student will receive a trophy, recital certificate plus a one-course full scholarship.

Other guests are Annie Kelu, Most Outstanding Student Karen Erica Brazil, Claire Javier and Harold Montano.

Among the products of the PMTS are Lindsay Custodio, Ynez Veneracion, Pal Villaluz, Marissa, Cheliza Padilla, Michelle Reyes, Rachelle Anne Reyes, Lianne Loren and Ma. Arleen Cagas, the 1984 Bulilit champion of "Tanghalan ng Kampeon."

The Philippine Music Training School is at 117-A S. Macaya St., Pasong Tamo, Tandang Sora, Quezon City, 454-0078.

Proceeds of the concert will go to the Philippine Music Training School Foundation.

Christmas competitions at Star Malls

THIS December, the Star Group of Malls is holding a Christmas tree making and decorating contest at Starmall Edsa, a *belen*-making contest at Metropolis Star Alabang, and a lantern-making contest at Starmall Las Piñas.

All competitions will be held separately only on Sunday, Dec. 5.

For all contests, each participating group should have three members at least 18 years old. Each group has a minimum of six hours to complete their entry. Only recycled materials can be used, and the theme is "Under the Sea Christmas."

Judging criteria are creativity, quality and technique, design originality and relevance to theme.

Call 872-5249, 850-0559 or 718-1886.

Women without men in 'Spirit...

From page 1

equally famous ex-boyfriends.

Old friends

"Rica and I are friends from way back," said Ciara of her co-star in the old teen series, "TGIS." "We only got close to Alex [Alessandra's nickname] because of Oyo, who's my cousin."

Ciara commented that each one of them had shades of their characters in the movie. "But I'm not as bratty as Cecille [her character]. Rica is prim and proper like Kelly. Alex [Alessandra] is really like Myra, *magulo*."

Alessandra related that she had eerie experiences while filming "Spirit of the Glass" in Malolos, Bulacan. She said she discovered old leaflets about divorce and Mama Mary in an attic as an example. But this pales in comparison to the ones she had as a child.

She recalled that she once saw her elder sister Assunta's soul out her body. "I thought she was sitting at the foot of the bed but she was actually sleeping beside me."

She also experienced being raped by a spirit, Alessandra said. "While I was praying, I heard a woman's voice. When I was lying in bed, I felt something was over me. I couldn't get up. I forgot about that incident until I took a shower and I saw scratches all over my chest."

Alessandra, who's proven her acting chops in dramas like "Azucena," "Mga Munting Tinig" and "The Homecoming," is the lead star of the Singaporean thriller titled "The Maid." It is projected to give the Filipino-Italian actress wider recognition in Asia.

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3 RESERVE
4 (SDDS) RESERVE
5 RESERVE
6 (DOLBY) RESERVE
7 (DTS) RESERVE
8 RESERVE
9 RESERVE

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2 OUT OF REACH

Lianas Cinema
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5 GOLD (DOLBY) SEED OF CHUCKY
6 GOLD (SDDS) NATIONAL TREASURE
7 GOLD (DOLBY) ALEXANDER
8 (ADDS) BCUZ OF U
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10 (ADDS) HELLWOLF

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4 BCUZ OF U
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6 NATIONAL TREASURE

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Drew Barrymore's father dies

LOS ANGELES—John Drew Barrymore, the troubled heir to an acting dynasty and the father of movie star Drew Barrymore, died Monday at 72.

"He was a cool cat. Please smile when you think of him," Drew Barrymore said in a statement. No information was released about the cause of death or where in L.A. he died.

John D. Barrymore was part of an acting clan that included his father, the famed stage and early film actor John Barrymore, and his father's siblings, Lionel Barrymore and Ethel Barrymore. Drew Barrymore is his daughter by his third wife, Ildiko Jaid Barrymore.

He was born in Beverly Hills on June 4, 1932. His mother was actress Dolores Costello.

He started his career as a teenager, appearing professionally first as John Barrymore Jr. and then as John Drew Barrymore.

His early roles in the 1950s included the movies "The Sundowners," "High Lonesome," "Quebec," "The Big Night," "Thunderbirds" and "While the City Sleeps."

Along the way there were problems with drugs, drunken driving and violence, domestic and otherwise.

By the early 1960s he had left Hollywood for Italy, working in European movies.

"I'm not a nice, clean-cut American kid at all," he said in a 1962 interview. "I'm just a human being. Those things just happen." *AP*

Godzilla joins immortals

From page 4

some rubber suit he wears in his latest picture, "Godzilla Final Wars," which opens on Dec. 4 in Japan.

The film is the 28th Godzilla adventure produced by Japanese studio Toho Co. Ltd. since the giant, prehistoric lizard, awakened by atomic bomb tests, first roared out of the Pacific to threaten civilization in the original 1954 movie.

A metaphor for the perils of the nuclear age, the film was made nine years after the end of World War II, when the firebombing of Tokyo and atomic destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were still fresh in Japan's national consciousness.

Soon after it was released in Japan, Hollywood producers bought US rights to the film and, instead of dubbing it into English, they recut the original with new scenes starring Raymond Burr as an American reporter covering the monster's rampage through Tokyo. *Reuters*

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1 BRIDGET JONES DIARY 2
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PG-13

2 ALEXANDER
11:45, 3:15, 6:45, 10:15
R-13

3 NATIONAL TREASURE
10:30, 1:05, 3:40, 6:15 8:50, 11:25
GP

4 THE POLAR EXPRESS
10:30, 12:45, 3:15, 5:45, 8:15, 10:45
GP

Araneta Center
ENTERTAINMENT GUIDE

ALI MALL CINEPLEX
3 Dolby ALEXANDER 10:10 am 1:40 pm 5:10 pm 8:40 pm
4 SDDS NATIONAL TREASURE 12:25 pm 3:20 pm 6:05 pm 8:55 pm
5 dts SEED OF CHUCKY 12:20 pm 2:30 pm 4:40 pm 6:50 pm 9:00 pm
6 Dolby PA SIYAM 12:30 pm 2:30 pm 4:30 pm 6:30 pm 8:40 pm
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CHRISTMAS WITH THE KRANKS GP 12:00,1:55,3:50, 5:50,7:50,9:50	NATIONAL TREASURE GP 11:50,2:25,5:00,7:35,10:10	BRIDGET JONES PG13 12:50,3:10,5:30,7:50, 10:10
ALEXANDER R13 12:50,4:00,7:10,10:20	SEED OF CHUCKY	POLAR EXPRESS GP 12:40,2:55,5:10,7:25 ,9:40

MATINEE SCREENINGS BEFORE 5:00 P.M. - P80.00 - MON. - FRI.

THEATER MOVIE GUIDE

MANILA

EASTERN	
MAXIM	CLOSED
MIRAMAR	SEX BOMB / RAMPADORA
ODEON	X-MEN 2
ODEON-2	BUKID AY BASA / KASIBULAN
ROBEN	BOLD STAR
TANDEM-1	SUGAT
TANDEM-2	KATAWAN MO LANGIT KO
TIMES	SPY : LEGEND OF CROCODILE

QUEZON CITY

ACT-1	SENSUAL ISLAND
ACT-2	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT
ACT-3	ORIGINAL SIN
ACT-4	HANGGANG KAILAN KA PAPATAY
CORONET A	KERIDA / SUKDULAN
CORONET B	A MAN APART
QUEZON-1	BERTUD NG PUTIK
REMAR	X-MEN 2
REMAR-2	BOLD STAR

NOVA MALL - NOVALICHES CINEMA

A	SUGAT
B	CLOSED
C	

MANDALUYONG CITY

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CINEMA 1 2,3&4	ALEXANDER / BRIDGET JONES / POLAR EXPRESS / NATIONAL TREASURE
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CAINTA RIZAL

STA. LUCIA EAST	(681-5401 TO 19)
CINEMA-1	SANTA SANTITA
CINEMA-2	NAKAW NA SANDALI
CINEMA-3	MINSAN PA
CINEMA-4 (DOLBY DIGITAL)	AFTER THE SUNSET
CINEMA-5 (DTS)	CLOSED FOR RENOVATION
CINEMA-6	CLOSED FOR RENOVATION
CINEMA-7	CLOSED FOR RENOVATION
CINEMA-8	CLOSED FOR RENOVATION
CINEMA-9 (DTS)	POLAR EXPRESS
CINEMA-10 (DOLBY DIGITAL)	ALEXANDER
CINEMA-11 (SDDS)	ALEXANDER
CINEMA-12	NATIONAL TREASURE
CINEMA-14	SAW
CINEMA-15	BCUZ OF U

LORES

CINEMA-2	SENSUAL ISLAND
CINEMA-3	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT

NE CINEMAGIC - CABANATUAN

(LAS PINAS)	BOURNE SUPREMACY
CINEMA-1	FENG SHUI
CINEMA-2	SECRET WINDOW
CINEMA-4	[illegible]

UNIWIDE COASTAL MALL

(PARANAQUE)	SENSUAL ISLAND
CINEMA-1	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT
CINEMA-2	MEN IN BLACK II
CINEMA-4	SELDA

star group of cinemas movie guide
IN DOLBY DIGITAL SOUND

star mall EDSA-SHAW
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3 Pa-Siyam
4 Alexander
5 Nakaw na Sandali

METROPOLIS ALABANG star
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1 Seed of Chucky
2 Nakaw na Sandali
3 Pa-Siyam
4 Bcuz of U
5 Alexander
6 National Treasure

star mall LAS PIÑAS
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LMF 10:00 PM
② BRIDGET JONES : The Edge of Reason
PG-13/FS 11:45AM 2:15PM 4:45PM 7:15PM
LMF 9:45 PM
③ POLAR EXPRESS
GP/FS 11:30AM 2:00PM 4:30PM 7:00PM
LMF 9:30 PM
④ NATIONAL TREASURE
GP/FS 11:00AM 1:45PM 4:30PM 5.15PM
LMF 10:00 PM
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1 ALEXANDER • THX	6 NATIONAL TREASURE
2 ALEXANDER	7 GINGERSNAPS 3
3 SEED OF CHUCKY	8 BCUZ OF U
4 PA-SIYAM	9 THE POLAR EXPRESS
5 BRIDGET JONES 2	10 SANTA SANTITA

ERMITA 536-7809 to 12

1 ALEXANDER	
2 GINGERSNAPS 3	5 SEED OF CHUCKY
3 BRIDGET JONES 2	6 NATIONAL TREASURE
4 PA-SIYAM	7 RESERVE

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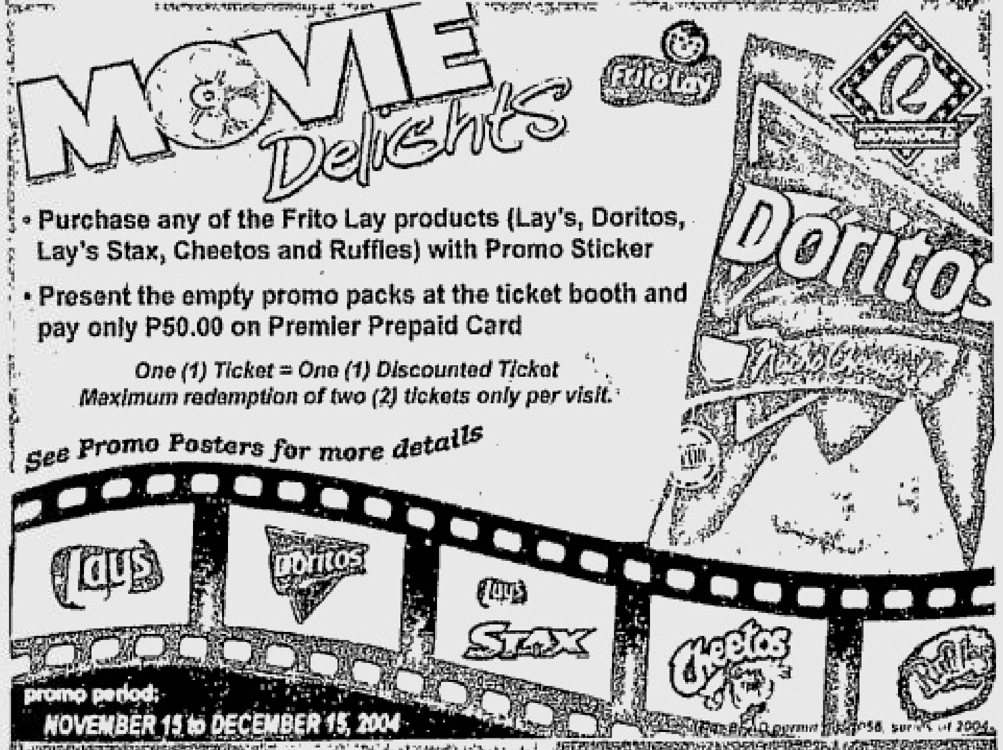
1 SEED OF CHUCKY	5 THE INCREDIBLES
2 BRIDGET JONES 2	6 THE POLAR EXPRESS
3 NATIONAL TREASURE	7 ALEXANDER
4 BCUZ OF U	8 PA-SIYAM

NOVALICHES 935-3229/31

1 ALEXANDER	5 BRIDGET JONES 2
2 NATIONAL TREASURE	6 SEED OF CHUCKY
3 THE INCREDIBLES	7 THE POLAR EXPRESS
4 BCUZ OF U	8 PA-SIYAM



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Brilliant highlights of 'Alexander' all in Colin Farrell's hair'

NEW YORK—Oliver Stone's three-hour epic, "Alexander," has had US critics tripping over themselves to heap derision on what most agree is a costly camp disaster from the director of "JFK" and "Platoon."

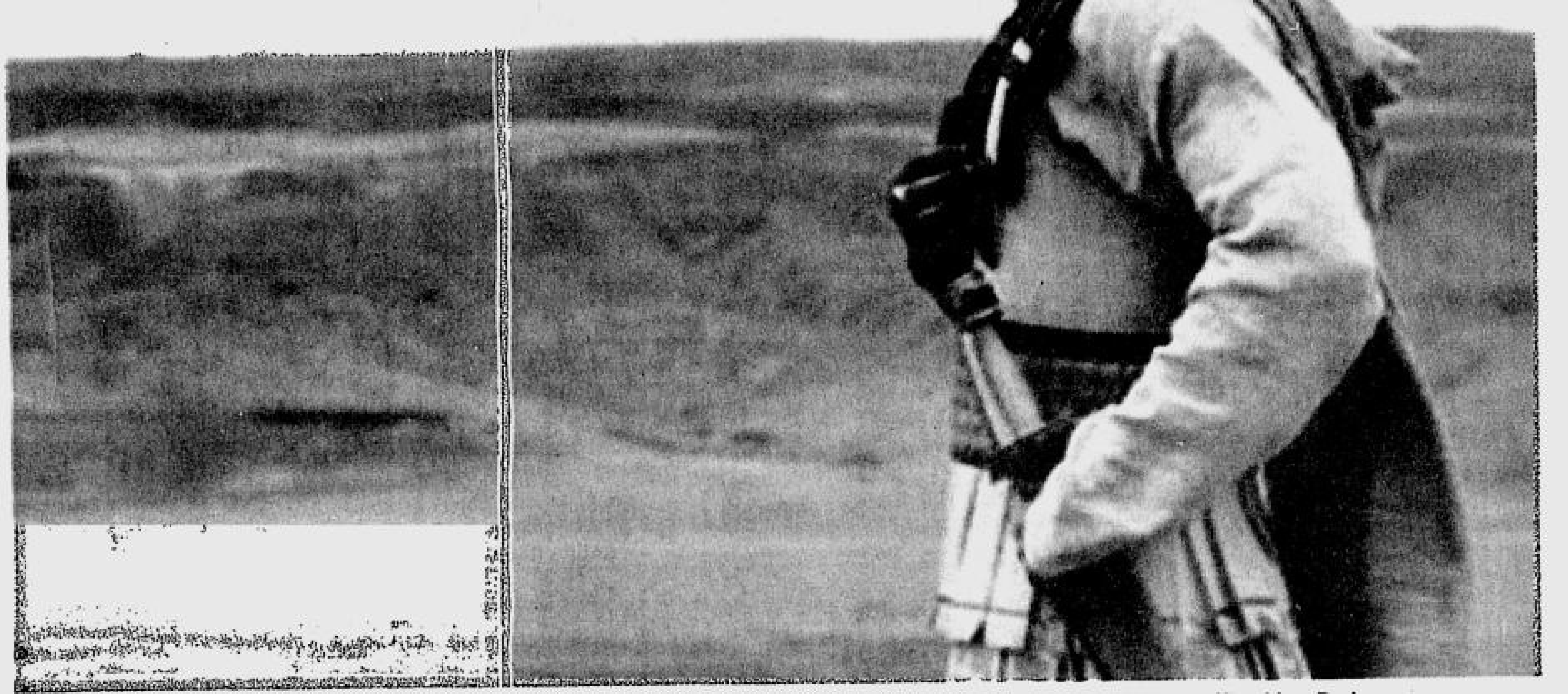
"Puerile writing, confused plotting and shockingly off-note performances," was the New York Times' verdict of Stone's big budget take on the life of Alexander the Great, the Macedonian king who had conquered a substantial part of the world before his death at 32.

REVIEW

Colin Farrell plays the title role, and most critics opted to focus on his jarringly bleached hairstyle rather than his character's heroic achievements.

"'Alexander is full of brilliant highlights, and they're all in Colin Farrell's hair," said the Boston Globe.

Other descriptions of Farrell's hairdo ranged from "dreadful-looking blond pageboy," to "epically bad dye job."



"DREADFUL-LOOKING blond pageboy," says one reviewer of the Oliver Stone film, which also evoked comparisons to the story of President Bush.

Greco-Gabor accent

Another favorite target was the bizarre accent employed by Angelina Jolie, who plays Alexander's vampishly domineering, snake-stroking mother Olympias.

"Greco-Gabor" said the Globe, "a combination of Mata Hari and Count Dracula" suggested Variety, while the Washington Post had trouble searching for an appropriate comparison.

"Really, words fail me here. But let's try," spluttered the Post reviewer.

"Give this young woman the hands-down award for best impression of Bela Lugosi while hampered by a 38-inch bust line," it added.

But the real venom was reserved for Stone and his direction of what the Times called his "big, blowsy movie."

"Butt- and mind-numbing" snorted the New York Post, while the Los Angeles Times marvelled at how "the film does what Alexander the man never did: It wastes an opportunity."

"As a director of performance, Stone is hopeless," the Washington Post said. "His Alexander, as expressed through the weepy histrionics of Colin Farrell, is more like a desperate housewife than a soldier. He's always crying."

No Orcs and hobbits

The battle scenes are given some grudging praise for their technical proficiency, although there was near unanimity that the last word on computer-generated scenes of mass combat had been written by Peter Jackson's "Lord of the Rings" trilogy.

The Globe described the movie as less sword-and-sandal and more "sword and flip-flop"

"When you've seen Orcs and hobbits fighting for the future of the world, it's a little hard to get excited about Persians and Greeks fighting over someone's imperial hubris 2,300 years ago," said the Washington Post.

"If we've seen one sequence in which anonymous soldiers are impaled by zooming arrows, we've seen them all," added the Globe.

The Globe also took issue with what it saw as Stone's lack of clarity regarding the moral issue of warfare, describing the movie as less sword-and-sandal and more "sword and flip-flop."

Modern-day version

With the big-budget movie debuting just weeks after the US presidential election, Americans still fiercely divided about President George W. Bush and his policies, and US forces locked in bloody conflict in Iraq (one of Alexander's stomping grounds), Stone's "Alexander" almost can't help but seem like a political allegory.

Both Alexander and President Bush are the most powerful leaders of their day, raised in the shadow of dynamic fathers who also wielded worldwide influence, and defined by an ambitious and ongoing war in a foreign land that is historically difficult to occupy.

Both Alexander and Bush spent years pursuing a high-profile enemy leader who fled into the hills of the Middle East.

"The film was never made for the purposes of a correlation or to say anything about today's present state," said Farrell, who stars in the title role.

"People say history repeats itself," the actor added. "Well, it does in different ways, shapes and forms. This was kind of a freaky coincidence that our story takes place exactly where all the madness we're all talking about takes place now."

Intrigued by greatness

"I think it depends on what your political slant is and what you want to do," said Jolie. "[Stone] made a film that is very open-minded, laying things out there that are both good and bad."

Jolie, an active follower of foreign affairs as a UN goodwill ambassador, said she's happy "if [the movie] raises questions and gets people talking and gets people looking at how we approach entering other cultures, what we do against them, what we do when we don't understand them."

According to Farrell, Stone, who previously stirred political emotions with "Platoon," "JFK," "Nixon" and "Born on the Fourth of July," is "always intrigued by greatness, by people who make a difference, people who left their mark on the world, people who have something to say about how life is lived and how times are either a-changing or not a-changing."

Alexander has intrigued Stone since boyhood.

"He's a dashing-warrior king who had a vision of compassion, generosity of spirit and peace," Stone said. "He was not a needless killer, he was not a butcher. At times he did massacre, but these were hard times. He did so with a purpose, with a reason.

"He did not have the Genghis Khan or Attila the Hun mentality," the filmmaker added. "He was a builder, and in his wake he left a Hellenic empire." *AFP*

'Pretty Woman' is happy and resting with Phinnaeus Walter, Hazel Patricia

SHOW STOPPER

LOS ANGELES—Hollywood's beloved "Pretty Woman" Julia Roberts was "happy" and resting Monday after delivering the greatest performance of her life: giving birth to twins following a turbulent pregnancy.

The Oscar-winning superstar brought a boy and a girl into the world on Sunday after spending nearly a month in bed following a dramatic health scare that saw her shuttling between hospital and her Los Angeles home.

"She gave birth very early on Sunday morning, and she had been on bed rest since late October," said Jess Cagle, a senior editor for People magazine, which got the scoop on the Oscar-winning actress' double feature.

"She is rested and happy and hoping to go home in the next few days," he told CBS television's "The Early Show."

The 37-year-old superstar and her cameraman husband of two years, Danny Moder, have named their twins—who were born more than a month early—Phinnaeus Walter Moder and Hazel Patricia Moder.

Roberts was taken to hospital on Oct. 23 and placed on a fetal monitor after she began having early contractions more than two months before her January due date.

But Roberts told USA Today in an interview last week that despite the scare, her pregnancy had not come complete with some of the more common miseries expectant mothers face.

"Never got sick," she said. "I've heard horror stories about people who have a sip of water and then throw up for four hours. But I come from hardy stock. I'm Southern," she told the paper.

ROBERTS AND MODER before the twins

Roberts' publicist Marcy Engelman refused to comment on the star's latest role as a mother, one which she took on just days before the release of her two latest movies, "Ocean's 12" and "Closer," which premieres Friday.

Mike Nichols' drama "Closer" already has Tinseltown tongues wagging about a possible second Oscar statuette for Roberts, who shot to international stardom with 1990's "Pretty Woman." The film, which tells the story of a tangled series of romances between four people, also stars Natalie Portman and British stars Jude Law and Clive Owen.

Adventure flick "Ocean's Twelve," which opens Dec. 10 in North America, is a sequel to the 2001 remake "Ocean's Eleven." Despite being confined to bed by her pregnancy, Roberts has continued promoting both films from her Los Angeles hospital room.

"I think that last Monday or Tuesday, after doing some phone interviews from her hospital bed, she was actually able to go home for the rest of the pregnancy," Cagle told CBS.

"And then the little twins were just ready to come out, so she went back to the hospital over the weekend." Moder and Roberts, who won the best actress Oscar for her role as a crusading US lawyer in the 2000 film "Erin Brockovich," had reportedly been trying for some time to start a family.

The movie star married Moder at a surprise ceremony at their hideaway home in the western US state of New Mexico in July 2002.

Roberts was previously married to singer Lyle Lovett, with whom she walked down the aisle in 1993. That union lasted only 21 months.

Roberts shot to worldwide fame after playing a loveable prostitute opposite Richard Gere in "Pretty Woman," a role for which she was nominated for a best actress Academy Award.

She also won a best supporting actress nod for her role in 1989's "Steel Magnolias." The actress, known for her luminous smile, also starred in such hits as the romantic comedy "Notting Hill" opposite Hugh Grant and appeared in last year's 1950s period drama "Mona Lisa Smile."

She also appears in the star-studded film "Ocean's Twelve"—which hits theaters in the United States Dec. 10—alongside George Clooney, Brad Pitt and Catherine Zeta-Jones. *AFP*

MONSTER that became a savior gets a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame

Godzilla joins immortals

HOLLYWOOD—Fifty years after he first lumbered from the sea to breathe fire, trample cities and thrill generations of filmgoers, Japan's most famous movie monster, Godzilla, was honored on Monday with a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame.

The gargantuan reptile is the latest in a pantheon of famous critters, including Mickey Mouse, Bugs Bunny and Woody Woodpecker, to have his name enshrined on Hollywood Boulevard along with 2,200 flesh-and-blood stars, like Cary Grant and John Wayne.

Accepting the honor on behalf of the self-proclaimed "King of the Monsters" was the 5-foot-4-inch-tall Japanese actor who plays Godzilla on screen, Tsutomo Kitagawa.

The actor donned the fear-

GODZILLA/3

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